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MINNIE CARLETON.

BY

MARY BELLE BARTLETT.

NEW YORK:
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No. 506 BROADWAY.
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TO MY MOTHER

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED, AS A SLIGHT TOKEN

OF THE AFFECTION OF HER DAUGHTER,

MARY BELLE BARTLETT.

LIBRARY

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MINNIE CARLETON.

I.

The First Sorrow.

IT was the twilight of a cheerless autumn day. The withered leaves were falling to the ground with a rustling sound, and the bare branches swayed to and fro in the piercing wind, which whistled with a mournful music as it swept through the long avenue of trees that shaded the old homestead. In the pleasant old-fashioned sitting-room a more cheering scene awaits us,—not in the inmates of Oak Grove, for one was near the gates of death, and angels were waiting at the portals of the tomb to convey her freed spirit to her Saviour's bosom.

A bright fire was burning on the ample

hearth, the wreathing smoke was curling up the wide chimney, and the huge logs were crackling and blazing, throwing a ruddy glare upon the time-stained walls, making fantastic shadows, and casting golden streams of light upon the rare collection of family portraits. There was the father of the present owner of the homestead, far advanced in the pilgrimage of life. Silvery locks were mingled with the once raven ones of youth, and with a careless grace clustered around his wrinkled brow. The fire of youth in his eyes was dimmed, but there burnt now in their soft blue depths a calmer, holier light, that spoke of the glories unrevealed of the "spirit land." "Passing away" was plainly written on every lineament.

There was a brave, handsome youth; the features were pleasing, but their expression was far from it, even repulsive. One would gaze sorrowfully, and sigh as he turned away. Intellect was imprinted on the noble brow, and genius burnt in the fiery eye; an expres-

sion of scorn curled the haughty lip, a half-contemptuous sneer; nothing faithful, or lovable, or kind was there. Ambition seemed the ruling passion: his aim was to have his name written in the annals of the worldly great, but whether that name were written in the Book of Life, he cared not. Such was Harry Carleton, now a wanderer in a foreign land.

The portrait of the present owner of Oak Grove homestead hung over the mantel. The stern, compressed lip spoke an iron will, and the haughty eye told not of affection. The face was strikingly handsome; he could win admiration, but not easily—love.

Let us turn to a more pleasing picture,—that of a sweet, benevolent lady, with looks almost "*too* pure for earth." The eye so soft and pensive in repose, so full of womanly tenderness and truth; and the mouth, betokening gentle firmness and decision, could not fail of winning love.

A maiden was sitting before the fire: her

head was bowed in grief, and her form was trembling with suppressed emotion. She raised her head, and gazed long and sadly at the sweet angel face. One could tell at a glance that they were mother and daughter: there were the same soul-beaming eye and gentle mouth,—feeling and intellect marking every feature.

Yet no one called Miriam Carleton handsome, but merely interesting; she possessed a nameless charm that attracted every one.

"Mother, dearest mother," she murmured, "must you indeed leave me? On your bosom my infant head was pillowed; you smoothed the path for my infant feet; at your knee I learned to love the name of my Creator; you, ever kind and sympathizing, have listened to all my childish griefs; you led me to the Saviour; you have wept with me, prayed with me, my loved counsellor and faithful friend! My mother! oh, my mother!"

Her long pent-up grief burst forth, and she wept unrestrainedly. She walked up and

down the long room trying in vain to calm the deep sorrow with which her young heart seemed bursting. Finally her sobs died away, and no sound, save the monotonous ticking of the old timepiece, disturbed the stillness. Miriam felt it to be oppressive. She thought, "If I could only see my mother!" but Mrs. Carleton wished to bid farewell to each separately, and now her husband was with her. Miriam took her favorite seat at the fireside, and mused. She was much given to reveries. The king of terrors had never entered that happy family before, and now they felt his dread approach, and trembled. "If it were only father," thought Miriam, "I could bear it. Oh! why does he shut up his heart from his children?—if he would only *let* us love him, how happy we might be!"

She listened: footsteps were approaching, and her father entered. She glanced at his face; *there* she could read the answer to the question she dared not ask. There was *no hope.*

"Minnie, my child! go to your mother," he said kindly, and stooping kissed her brow. Minnie burst into tears: he had not kissed her since she could remember, and now it touched her heart. She fondly returned his caress, and then hastened to her mother's room. Mrs. Carleton smiled faintly as her daughter approached the bedside, and, taking her hand in hers, softly whispered her name. Miriam kissed her pale lips again and again; she could not speak—her heart was too full for words. Mrs. Carleton looked at her with all the tenderness and yearning of a mother's soul.

"Oh! my daughter, if I could shield you from the world's temptations; if I could present you to 'Our Father,' as the child he has given me, while in the innocence of youth; or if I could know that you will always be 'kept unspotted from the world,' death would not seem gloomy, or the grave cheerless."

She talked long and earnestly, as only a

dying mother can talk and feel, and Miriam listened with tearful eyes and aching heart. At the close, Mrs. Carleton said, "Promise me, Minnie, that you will train the little ones for heaven—that you will all meet me there."

Miriam pressed her hand—she could not trust herself to speak.

"Kneel down, Minnie—I will pray for you!" Miriam knelt by the bedside, and the mother poured out her soul in prayer. And what a prayer! so confiding, as if she had not a thought for herself! she knew that her Redeemer lived, and that she should "see Him as He is;"—her loved ones were in a Father's hands, and she submitted without a murmur.

Miriam never forgot that prayer: in after years it came to her like a healing balm; it whispered peace amid troubled conflicts, and faith in doubting moments.

As she arose, her mother said,—

"Remember, Minnie, your dying mother's

last words. Little blind Laurie I give to you. He is yours; he is bound to you now by the holiest ties, the sacred tie of brother and sister; besides, his affliction should make him very dear to you. Watch over him carefully, tenderly, and I will look from heaven and smile upon you. Good-bye, my ever dear daughter; you have been a comfort to me, and fully rewarded all my care; be a mother to my little ones, and such a daughter to your father as you have been to me. My last words, Minnie, remember—in all the trials of life, 'look to Jesus.' 'Earth hath not a sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.' Write that upon the tablets of your heart, and never, never erase it."

"Minnie, tell me before I die,—do *you* love the Saviour?"

Minnie burst into tears.

"I do, mother, I *do* love Him."

"Thank God!" and the mother's head was bowed in a prayer of gratitude.

* * * * * *

That night Miriam Carleton was motherless. She was indeed bereaved, for a faithful mother's place no one can ever fill.

It was midnight: the moon had risen, and tipped the tree-tops with silver; its soft beams peeped through the window where the motherless children lay sleeping. Miriam was kneeling there, praying for the household treasures that night committed to her keeping. She felt that she lived no longer for herself; dear ones were looking to her for guidance, and every look and tone of hers would henceforth impress their young minds. She knew that her influence would be deeply felt, and she prayed that she might exert it aright. Hitherto her life had been one gleam of sunshine, but now dark clouds were beginning to lower; and she, so weak and helpless, so self-distrustful,—could she perform her mission? "Perhaps my cloud has a silver lining," she thought. "I *know* it has, for do not 'all things work together for good to them that love God'? The blessed

promise is, 'As thy day, so shall thy strength be.' 'He will temper the wind to the shorn lamb.' Though all seems darkness, I can hear my Father's voice in gentle tones, saying, 'It is I, be not afraid!'"

Somewhat comforted by these assurances, Minnie arose. Little Laurie lay sleeping, his sweet face almost buried in a shower of golden ringlets; his sightless eyes were closed, and their long lashes swept his dimpled cheeks. His lips were parted by a smile, and as Minnie bent over to kiss him, he twined his arms around her neck, and murmured, "Don't leave me, dear mamma; I will love you always, mamma."

"Dear Laurie, I'm your mamma now," she whispered; "God help me to perform my mission," and her tears fell on the blind boy's face.

There lay Sophie, Nellie, and Gracie. Helen and Gracie were twins, but as different in appearance and disposition as it was possible for twins to be. Nellie was thoughtful,

gentle, and affectionate; her deep blue eyes spoke a mind far beyond her years, and the questions she often asked told of the workings of a mind almost matured. She always preferred a book, or serious conversation, to play:—not so Gracie; *she* was impulsive, mischievous, generous, and sensitive. Her black eyes fairly danced with fun, and her dark curls played bo-peep over her plump shoulders. She was always "sinning and repenting," as she expressed it. Not to love her was impossible; to find fault with her equally so. She loved every one, and every one loved her. Her hopeful, cheerful disposition led her to look on life as through a rose-tinted glass; and to be "as happy as Gracie" passed to be a proverb in the house.

Sophie was quiet and sedate,—in nowise remarkable.

Miriam loved her sisters dearly, and in their estimation no one was like "dear sister Minnie."

But it must be confessed that Laurence

was Minnie's favorite: blind from his birth, his misfortune had drawn him nearer, and Mrs. Carleton having had poor health, Minnie had been to him almost a mother. He was the pet of the household.

Minnie tenderly kissed each little cheek. How much nearer now they seemed than before! Gracie's cheek was wet with tears, and, after kissing them away, she softly left the room.

Minnie went down to the now deserted sitting-room. The fire was flickering and dying away, casting a sickly gloom over the apartment. She replenished it, and, sitting down on the hearth, buried her face in her hands. Oh! her heart was almost bursting, and she prayed that she might die! Die! and leave her "little ones" to stem life's troubled current without her aid? No! no!—she must learn what a sublime thing it is

"To *suffer* and be *strong*."

Then she prayed, trustingly, fervently,

"Thy will, not mine, be done." "Father, do with me as it seemeth good in thy sight." Oh! how good it is,—

"To know no will but His."

Her father was restlessly pacing the floor above the room in which her mother lay, pale in death, and she could hear his slow, measured tread, that spoke of deep, deep sorrow.

Still she sat, holding her midnight vigil; she could not sleep. The memory of the past came up before her; she could not

"Let the dead past bury its dead."

Then she mused on the future. She knew in whom she trusted, and felt herself endowed with grace and strength to meet the future's great demands.

She glanced at her mother's portrait, and —was it fancy? or, did it smile upon her?

Thus passed the lonely hours, and every hour the striking of the old clock in the

kitchen echoed through the house almost with a touch of sadness. Day was dawning: the faint grey light, struggling through the window, found Miriam still in heart communion.

II.

The Hour in the Library.

DAYS passed: Miriam's face wore a look of meek resignation, of chastened sorrow, most touching to see on so youthful a countenance. Her grief for her mother was as sincere as on the day of her burial; she still cherished her memory as sacred. Though a cloud often settled upon her heart, it was not suffered to dim the bright eye, chase away the sweet smile, or check the flow of cheerful, loving words. Ah! no; for the sake of those she loved, she bore her sorrow bravely. She lived not for herself; her mission on earth was to comfort others.

Her father was sadly changed: from the resolute, over-bearing man, he had become selfish, moody, and morose. He seemed

wrapt up in self; his children were unnoticed, and all their efforts to please him passed unrewarded even by a smile. He pursued the daily routine of his business as before: the day was passed in a neighboring city, and the evening in the library at home, and *alone*.

Miriam had loved her mother better than all the world beside, and now her warm affections clung to the "little ones," as she fondly called them. She loved her father, too, because he *was* her father, and tried to bring the light to his eye and the smile to his lips again; but in vain were all her endeavors. How she longed to throw her arms around his neck, and rest her throbbing head upon his bosom, for one word of consolation, one approving smile, to know that she discharged her many duties faithfully! "Oh! my mother!" was the cry that went up to heaven from her over-burdened heart. After a day of more than ordinary trial, she would steal into the room that contained

her mother's portrait: the calm, sweet face would seem to whisper "Peace." She remembered her mother's last prayer, and found comfort in "looking to Jesus."

Minnie was housekeeper,—everything was under her supervision; rather inexperienced, 'tis true, but she possessed a strong will, and every day the obstacles became less. A good-natured Irish girl flourished in the kitchen: she was a true daughter of Erin, and, with her strong arms and willing heart, she saved "Miss Minnie" many anxious thoughts. Minnie did all the mending; and often, when the large basket of clean clothes was brought into the sitting-room, she would look at the pile with a sinking heart.

One day Sophie noticed it, and, bringing her work-box, said, "Now, sister Minnie, let me mend too, you look so tired! I want to assist you, you do so much for us," said she, caressing her, "and we never help you at all."

"Don t you love me?"

"Indeed we do, better than any one else in the world."

"*That* is all the pay I ask!"

"But there is another way of showing it;—give me those stockings, and I will try and make them wearable."

Her fingers flew busily for a while.

"Is *love* good wages?" she asked, archly.

"The *very best*," was the smiling answer.

There was a pause.

"'Order is Heaven's first law,' isn't it?" asked Sophie.

"Yes!" said her sister, smiling again.

"Well, then, shouldn't there be order in all the family arrangements?"

"Certainly," but this time Minnie sighed.

"I know you do as well as you can, Minnie," said Sophie quickly, "but don't you think that if each of us had separate duties to perform at stated times, we could do more, and without so much confusion?"

"Well said, my little preacher; are you sure that's original?"

"Don't laugh, Minnie—I'm in earnest; I've been thinking of it ever since—mother died, but, being younger than you, I didn't like to propose it. I'm *thirteen*, now, sister—I can help you some."

"Thank you, dear Sophie, you *are* right."

"Well, Minnie, let me take part of the weekly mending under my care; and let me fold the ironed clothes and lay them in the drawers, and all such little things that worry you so."

"You may *try*, Sophie."

"But what will our little mad-cap, Gracie, do?"

"If she takes care of herself she will have her hands full," said Minnie, laughing, as she thought of her fun-loving, frolicsome sister.

Just then Gracie burst into the room, her cheeks flushed and her curls in disorder.

"I've been tumbling round in the garret, Minnie, playing with Rover, and was having *such* fun, till I saw father coming up the road on Roanoke; and now, Minnie," she con-

tinued, sadly, "we can't have our music to-night—you know he dislikes it so since mother died. I wish he were like other fathers," she added impetuously.

"Hush, Gracie, he's in the hall."

"I wish he would come in and talk to us as mother used to, about the Saviour's blessing little children, and all the other pretty Bible stories," said Nellie.

"I don't," said Gracie; "I don't believe he knows them.

"He is our father, Gracie, if he don't seem like mother," said Sophie, going to the window to hide her tears.

"I wish he wasn't," said Gracie.

"Gracie!" said Minnie, reprovingly.

"It snows! It snows!" cried Sophie; "look, look!"

The children all hastened to the window to see the first snow that had fallen that season.

It was falling in feathery flakes, lighting on twigs and bushes, and covering the fields with a snowy carpet.

"How *very* beautiful!" they all cried.

Laurie left his little chair by the fireside, and came to the window; the eager tones of his sisters fell heavily on his heart. Miriam noticed his saddened expression, and drew him towards her and kissed him.

"Is it *very* beautiful?"

"Yes, Laurie."

"You are not blind, Minnie, or Sophie, or Gracie, or Nellie. Why can't *I see* as well as you? If God loves little children, why does He make them blind?"

"Sit down in my lap and I will tell you. Do you think *I* love you, little brother?"

"Oh! yes, dearly," said the blind boy.

"Did I love you this morning when I held your hand so hard, and opened the sore on your thumb?"

"Yes, you said 'twould make it well, and you always tell me the truth."

"Does God *know* more than you?"

"He knows everything," said Laurie, softly.

"Does He love you better than sister Minnie does?"

"He loves me better than any one else *can*, Minnie."

"Would he make you blind, then, if it were not good for you?"

"I won't complain again, Minnie, only I wanted to see the snow *so* much."

"I know it, darling. What was your text this morning?"

"'All things shall work together for good to them that love God.'"

"Do *you* love Him, Laurie?"

"I love the *Saviour*."

"Then it will 'work together for good,' won't it?"

"Yes!" in a low tone.

He lay quite still for a few moments, and then whispered, "I've been praying 'Thy will, not mine, be done,' Minnie."

Miriam answered with a kiss.

"It's getting dark, Minnie; won't you tell us a story?" pleaded Nellie.

"I will play for you if you will ask Katy for a light."

"What will father say?" asked Grace.

"I will ask him."

Minnie went to the library door. Her father was pacing up and down the room as usual: she raised her hand to knock, but her heart failed her, and she hesitated. When Mr. Carleton entered the house, he stood for a moment irresolute whether or not to go to the sitting-room among his children. Gracie's voice arrested his attention. He listened. Conscience whispered, "She is right—I'm not a father to my children; oh! my sainted Miriam!" and, hurrying to the library, he threw himself upon his knees and wept, as only a strong man *can* weep. "What shall I do?" he cried, in agony. "God knows I love my children—why have I been so blind?"

A gentle knock was at the door. He opened it, and Minnie entered.

"What do you wish, my child?"

The unusual tone caused Minnie to look up; the traces of tears were on his face, and she longed to throw her arms around his neck, and say, "Father, *dear* father."

"May I open the piano, father?" unconsciously she spoke in a softer tone.

"Certainly, Miriam!" and she was gone, wondering at the consent so easily obtained.

Mr. Carleton followed her softly and unobserved. She opened the long-neglected piano; the children gathered around it, and their father sat down in the recess of a window, completely hidden by the flowing drapery of the curtain.

"Sing my favorite!" "and mine!" "and mine!" burst from the eager lips. Hymn after hymn was sung.

"Now, Minnie, 'Cross and Crown.'" *That* was "Laurie's hymn."

Miriam sang in a sweet voice:

"'Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free?
No! there's a cross for every one,
And there's a cross for me.

"'How happy are the saints above
Who once went sorrowing here;
But now they taste unmingled love,
Ann joy without a tear.

''The consecrated cross I'll bear,
Till death shall set me free,
And then go home my crown to wear,
For there's a crown for me.'"

"How *very*, *very* beautiful that is!" said Minnie, closing the piano; "there is more comfort in that hymn for me than any other I ever heard. When I am fatigued, or anything goes wrong, if I but repeat the first line, I'm happy again!"

"The *cross* means self-denial, doesn't it?" asked Nellie, thoughtfully.

"Yes; you know the Saviour tells us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him."

"Can children bear the cross?"

"Yes, in a measure; and it is as heavy for them to bear as it is for grown-up persons."

"*How* can we deny ourselves?" asked Gracie.

"Think, and answer for yourselves. Each of you tell me how that you might have denied yourselves to-day."

Each little face was sobered.

"I know!" said Nellie; "I was reading a book that Gracie wanted, and I wouldn't let her have it!"

"That was my fault, Nellie," said Gracie, quickly; "I was selfish to want it."

"I wouldn't stay with Laurie to-day when he had the headache, but left him with Katy, to go to walk with Susie Raymond," said Sophie.

"I was naughty to tease you, Sophie," said Laurie, "when I knew you didn't want to stay."

"Well! I won't do it again," said Sophie.

"I tried to throw off my cross when I spoke of my blindness," said Laurie.

"But you were sorry for it."

"Yes, I thought I could not wear the crown unless I bore my cross."

"I was wrong when I spoke so about

father," said Gracie, more thoughtfully than usual.

"Yes, Gracie, he's so troubled now; he loved mother so much, he can't help it," said Nellie.

"*Charity* thinketh no evil," the eldest sister repeated.

A stifled sob startled the children. They drew closer together.

"Are you afraid?" whispered Gracie.

"No! no! Gracie, it's only the wind," said Miriam.

"How it sounds!" Gracie said, shuddering—"just the way it did the night mother died."

"That is such a beautiful chapter on 'Charity,'—won't you read it to us, Minnie?" asked Sophie.

Miriam read it slowly and distinctly.

"Charity means *love*, then," said Nellie; "I didn't know it before."

"Do you think Christians always love each other?" asked Gracie.

"Yes! Gracie, their love for each other is a sure sign that they *are* Christians. Christians are all one family just as we are here, with God for their Father, and love each other as we do."

"And *their* father loves them!" said Laurie.

"How happy Christians must be!" said Sophie.

"Indeed they are!" said Miriam.

"Are *you* a Christian, Minnie?" asked Sophie.

"I hope so," said Minnie, softly.

"Is father, too?"

"No," said Gracie, "I don't believe he is."

"'*Charity* thinketh no evil,'" whispered Nellie to he twin-sister.

"Oh! dear, I forgot!" said Gracie.

"Is it wrong to forget?" asked Laurie.

"Yes, Laurie, God seems to think we shall be in danger of forgetting, for He sometimes says, 'Remember.'"

"Yes, 'Remember thy Creator.'"

"And 'Remember the Sabbath-day,' too."

"There's the tea-bell," said Nellie; "I'm sorry—I love to talk."

"And I love to eat," said Gracie, springing up; "come!"

The tea-bell was rung twice, thrice, yet it was not heeded by Mr. Carleton. The conversation of his children had sunk deep into his heart. "I *will* be a kind father, and a Christian, too," was his inward resolve, as he turned again to the library.

"Katy! will you knock at the library door? perhaps father didn't hear the bell," said Miriam, seating herself at the head of the well-spread table.

Katy returned in a few minutes. "He doesn't want any tea, but would like to see you, Miss Minnie, in the library in an hour." Such was Katy's message, to which the children wonderingly listened.

"I wonder what he wants now!" said Gracie.

"You do not speak respectfully, Gracie."

"I like to say what I mean, whether it's good or bad!" answered Gracie, pouting her red lips.

"Our thoughts affect only ourselves, Gracie; our words may injure others."

"You look as grave as a—a—what is it, —in our history, Nellie?"

"Oracle?"

"Yes! won't you tell us about them, Minnie?"

"One of these days. Laurie, will you have more milk and water?" said Miriam.

"How strange it is," said Nellie, who was just coming out of a brown study, "that every look, and word, and action, may influence others."

"We should be more careful then to guard our thoughts and guide our lips; we should pray that our tongue 'may be kept from evil, and our lips from speaking guile.'"

"You never used to talk so, Minnie. I can remember when you were as wild and impulsive as Gracie."

"Yes, Sophie; but mother taught me to pray that grace might be given me to control my hasty temper, and cure my many faults; and besides," she added, smiling, looking at the bright faces around her, "I have you all to keep straight, and it takes a sober head."

"I wish I could be good," said Sophie.

"Don't *wish* alone, Sophie. '*Prayer* is the golden key that opens the wicket of mercy.'"

"Minnie, may I come to your room and have a talk with you to-night?"

"Certainly, dear Sophie, always and without reserve."

Sophie looked up gratefully.

"Isn't Grace a pretty name, Minnie?"

"Beautiful, Laurie; but why do *you* think so?"

"Don't you know the hymn,—

"'Grace! 'tis a charming sound'?"

and the little fellow repeated it.

Gracie blushed; and when Minnie kissed him there were tears in his eyes.

"Father may keep you a long time, Minnie —let us have our evening prayer first," pleaded Nellie, in a tone that Minnie could not resist.

"If you wish it. Come to the sitting-room."

Miriam read the twenty-third psalm; they all sang,—

"I love to steal awhile away,"

and then the eldest sister's voice arose to heaven in prayer for those she loved so fondly. They loved to hear her pray; they followed her in every petition, and then joined in repeating aloud the Lord's Prayer. "Our Father always hears when Minnie prays," little Laurie once said.

"The good-night kisses were given, with permission to sit and tell stories just one hour by the firelight, and then Minnie went up the broad stairs to the library door; her heart beat fast as she opened it. "My father may love us—perhaps my prayers are ans-

swered," was the joyful thought. Her father was so deeply absorbed in thought that he did not observe her entrance.

"Father!" said she, timidly.

"My daughter!" and he drew her towards him and kissed her brow passionately, again and again, his warm tears falling on her face. And *his* were not the only tears that were falling.

"Father, you *do* love me?"

"Love you! my Miriam; God knows I do!"

"And Sophie, Nellie, Gracie, and blind Laurie?"

"As father never loved before; but listen, Miriam."

He told her of his error, and of his repentance now; how that in future his life should be devoted to his children, thus seeking to repair the wrong he had already done. "And if my children's hearts are not already closed against me, I hope they will love their only remaining parent as fondly as he loves them."

Miriam's arms tightened around his neck.

"Can you doubt it, father? Oh! so often we have longed to show you how much we loved you, but you were so cold we dared not."

"That is in the past now, Miriam. My early education made me cold; besides, I'm naturally reserved and taciturn;—but such love as yours, Miriam, can melt the most icy heart. Your mother's death accomplished what in life would have been vain. *She* was my god. I madly worshipped the creature, scorning the Creator. We will now be a united family, here and in heaven, I trust."

Miriam glanced at his face, radiant now with joy within.

"Father!" she hesitated.

"What is it, my daughter?"

"Are you a Christian, father?"

The hot blood mounted to his face, and his lips trembled.

"Forgive me, father, I thought——"

"—— that it sounded strangely for *me* to [illegible] so."

"Yes!"

"Yes, Miriam, I humbly trust in 'Our Father's' pardoning love, through the intercession of our Mediator, 'Jesus Christ the righteous.' I have had a long struggle, for I was an infidel, Miriam; but now I feel the Holy Spirit bearing witness with my spirit that I am indeed His.'"

Miriam wept tears of joy.

"I have prayed for you so long, father; at mother's knee I was taught to say—'God make papa a Christian."

Mr. Carleton started.

Hours flew swiftly by, and still their conversation had not ended. A few hours ago Miriam had dreaded the name of 'father,' and *now* 'twas the sweetest name she knew.

As the clock struck eleven, Mr. Carleton said "Good-night, my daughter,' we shall both long remember this happy, happy evening."

Miriam fondly returned his embrace, and then went to her room as she believed the

happiest girl in the whole world. Sophie, Nellie, and Gracie slept together in the nursery. Minnie went in as usual to see if they were comfortable. Nellie and Gracie were sleeping, but Sophie wasn't there. Where could she be? As Minnie stepped into the hall, she saw Sophie standing in her long white night-dress at the window, looking at the stars.

Sophie started—"I've waited a long time for you, Minnie. What kept you so long? What makes you look so happy?" she added, glancing at her sister's face.

They sat down together on the floor under the window, and Minnie told her all their father had said.

"Oh! Minnie, I'm *so* glad! I can't be happy enough. How happy we shall be now! If dear mother only knew it."

"Perhaps she does, Sophie; she *may* be near us—we don't know."

"Do you believe in guardian angels, Minnie?"

"Yes; 'are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them which shall be heirs of salvation?'"

"When I do wrong, Minnie, something whispers 'Don't do it, Sophie,' and when I've conquered, I'm so happy."

"That is conscience, Sophie. I often think our minds are like battle-fields. The forces of the enemy of souls are in hostile array, defying the admonitions and pleadings of the Holy Spirit. There is a stirring conflict between our love of sinful pleasures, and an awakened conscience; and when right wins the victory, our guardian angel is at our side to whisper peace and hope, and the angels in heaven rejoice because the Arch-fiend has been defeated."

"Why, Minnie," said Sophie, in surprise, "do you think God notices such trifles as our heart-struggles?"

"Most assuredly, Sophie; and they are *not* trifles. Is the decision which a wavering sinner makes, a trifle? If the hairs of our

head are all numbered, will He not notice and approve our daily struggles to please Him?"

"I *know* all that, Minnie, but He seems such a High and Holy God, so full of power and majesty, as if he would not deign to look down upon the lowly creatures of earth!"

"He deigned to die for us, Sophie."

Sophie sighed—"I'm so bewildered when I think of these things—but I love to think of them. I never used to—I've changed so much lately."

"Mother's death has made you thoughtful; and perhaps, Sophie," said Miriam, looking lovingly in her face, "perhaps the Spirit is striving with you."

"I don't know," said Sophie, sadly—"I wish I *could* be a Christian."

III.

The Rainy Day.

WEEKS flew swiftly by, and the family at Oak Grove seemed more united every day. Next to their father Miriam was their head, and the younger ones clung to her for support,—as Gracie said, "like the tender vines that cling round the old oak on the hill-side;" all their disappointments were whispered in her ear, sure of finding sympathy. Sophie being next in age was more congenial, and many were their pleasant chats in Minnie's room at night, or at twilight beside the fire in the sitting-room: the last was usually their resort, and loved indeed was that twilight-hour. Sometimes their peals of laughter showed that they were not always grave; at other times they were more

serious, and discussed questions which might be laughed at by older and wiser heads, but which were full of interest to them. They would talk of books that they had read, and analyze the characters of their favorites; and there were many playful quarrellings, which were settled, Minnie said, by "*agreeing* to differ."

Minnie's west room and the window from which she watched the sunset were pleasant indeed. The room was furnished with taste, and arranged with an eye to comfort. The long book-shelves were well filled with her favorite authors,—choice selections in poetry, history, biography, tales, and travels, from every age; there were a number of French authors there too, for Minnie both spoke and read that language remarkably well. Her mother had been her teacher both in French and music, and with that mother's kind encouragement Miriam had progressed rapidly.

The pencil-sketches, and those in water-colors, betrayed good taste, and some ac-

quaintance with the principles of the art. The well-stocked portfolio, with now and then an original piece of "poetry," a short tale, or the reveries of leisure moments, told of a thoughtful mind, and one deeply imbued with a love of the beautiful.

Ah! Minnie loved her room; it was the scene of many a day-dream, for, like all other girls, Minnie built castles in the air. The future was brightly pictured before her; she had often imagined what she would *like* it to be: there she would sit by the window, resting her chin upon the sill, looking up at the deep blue sky, or at night watching the silver stars, and wondering if, when youth were passed, they would beam upon her as brightly as now in her childhood's home.

"Father won't live always," she once mused. "My sisters will marry, and leave the old homestead, and I shall be left alone; no, not alone—blind Laurie will be with me. How wrong I've been planning my future, and not putting *his* happiness first! and moth-

er gave him to me, too—how have I fulfilled my trust! I'm so selfish, I will think of him first, *always!*" she added, jumping up with energy, for she was in her usual position at the window, watching the drizzling rain of a cold March morning. "Laurie shall be all in all to me." She knelt, and prayed that God would accept the sister's vow. "What have I done?" she asked herself, as she arose from her knees; "have I rashly made a promise I shall not keep?" She opened her writing-desk, wrote on a slip of paper—"Laurie. Oak Grove, March 19th, 18—," and concealed it in a secret drawer.

She went down into the sitting-room; the children were amusing themselves, each in her own way. Gracie stood at the window, watching her father's receding form. He turned, threw a kiss, and was out of sight.

Gracie pressed her brow against the window-pane, and with a pouting lip and disconsolate face watched the falling rain. It had rained heavily all night, and there was

no prospect of its clearing off; dark clouds chased each other over the face of the sky, and the wind sighed drearily, drearily around the old homestead. The wind beat against the window-panes like the pattering of tiny feet. "Oh! will it *never* stop?" said Gracie, in a tone which, had it been said by any other person, would have been ill-humored. "I wanted to go to school so badly to-day; I say its *too* provoking!"

"Why do you love school so much and so suddenly?" asked Minnie.

Her cloud had passed over.

"Oh! it ain't school; Mary Miller promised to lend me the 'Arabian Nights.'"

"Don't say '*ain't*,'" said Sophie; "say it *is n't*."

"Don't read it, Gracie—it's not a good book for you."

Oh! yes, please—it ain't (*is n't*, I mean, Sophie) so very bad; the other girls read it."

"Yes, Gracie, but you mustn't. I'll give you 'The Swiss Family Robinson' instead."

"Did *you* ever read it, Minnie?"

"Yes, until I could think of nothing else but fairies and genii; I would cry out in my sleep about them."

"*Can't I*, Minnie?" said Gracie, putting her arms around her neck in her own coaxing way.

"No, Gracie, not for some years," said Minnie, firmly.

"Well, I don't care much about it."

"Sour grapes!" whispered Nellie.

"There! it rains harder than ever; what shall I do?"

"Did you ever hear of a good man, Gracie, who, on being asked his opinion of the weather, replied, "It will be just such weather as pleases me, for whatever pleases God pleases me?"

Gracie blushed, and looked ashamed.

"But, Minnie, what *can* I do this long day? I'm so lonely. I want somebody to play with."

"It will not seem so long if you are busy;

go and get your dissected map, and let me see what you know of geography."

Gracie eagerly ran for it. Miriam's smile had chased the frown from her brow, and she was "Happy Gracie" again.

She soon returned with the map, and, sitting down, was busily engaged with the puzzling blocks.

She could look at the rain now, and smile at her own ill-humor. Such is childhood, *happy* childhood; all smiles and tears, as changeful as an April day.

"Well, Nellie, what are you going to do?"

"Read the new history father brought home last night."

"Very well, my little grave historian! and you, Sophie?"

"Copy one of your drawings, if you will let me."

"Certainly, and I will help you."

Having seen her sisters all engaged, Miriam took her sewing—a piece of work for Laurie—and sat down to watch them.

Gracie's dark curls fell over her shoulders and down into her lap, and with an impatient "oh!" she threw them back. Her bright eyes were sparkling, her cheeks flushed with thought, and her lips compressed.

Miriam gazed proudly at her, for she was very proud of her beautiful young sister. "Talented and beautiful! what will her future be?" she asked herself, somewhat anxiously.

Nellie was absorbed in her book; one small hand supported her high forehead, and the other ran along the pages of her book, tracing the words as she read.

She raised her eyes; Minnie was looking at her.

"I'm reading of Charlotte Corday, Minnie; could it be possible," she added, "that she blushed when her head was shown to the people?"

"After it was cut off?" asked Gracie, looking up from her blocks.

"So it's said!" said Minnie, smiling.

"It *couldn't* be!" said the matter-of-fact Sophie.

"No; it ain't true," said Gracie; "it's a parable, I guess."

"*Miracle*, you mean," said Nellie, laughing immoderately.

"And you said 'ain't,'" said Sophie.

"Ain't *ain't* right, Minnie? If ain't ain't right, I won't say ain't; but, Sophie, you ain't always right, and how do you know that ain't ain't right?"

They all laughed heartily.

Laurie drew up his little chair, and laid his curly head on Minnie's knee.

"Tell me a story, Minnie!"

"About what, Laurie?"

"Any thing, only let it be very pretty."

Miriam began, busily plying her needle the while. "Once there lived a mighty king; he dwelt in a most beautiful palace, surrounded by all that could make life desirable. The monarch had but one son, whom he dearly, dearly loved; he was all that a

father's heart could wish. Far away in this monarch's domains was one of the loveliest isles of the ocean. The waves, all crested with silver, played over the shell-studded beach, making pleasant music; flowers were blooming in all the paths, and climbing over all the hedges; the branches of noble trees bent beneath their loads of delicious fruit; the singing-birds flitted from bough to bough, warbling their sweetest notes, and the air was always soft and balmy—no cold winds ever blew, and no storms ever came.

"Oh! how beautiful! how happy the people must have been! that is," he added in a lower tone, while the tears came to his eyes, "if they could *see!*"

"It was, indeed, an earthly paradise," continued Miriam, "and if the people had obeyed the good king who gave them all those beautiful gifts, and required only love in return, they would have been as happy as heart could have wished."

"Sin makes every thing ugly," said Sophie,

"And love every thing beautiful," said her brother.

"They grew tired of their beautiful home, and murmured against their Benefactor. Cruel, wicked deeds they committed every day, until the good king grew very angry. 'I will destroy them,' he said; 'the sight of that island shall no longer blast my eyesight! But his son—his kind, gentle son—had compassion on them. 'Heed my voice, oh! my father,' he cried; 'listen to the son of thy bosom; let *me* be punished instead of thy rebellious subjects; I love them too well to see them die; willingly will I suffer in their stead.' The good father was much affected, but nevertheless he granted his son's request. The people were told of the sacrifice their young prince had made, and saw him suffer death—the innocent for the guilty. Their monarch then granted them pardon if they would ask it in this son's name. 'Let all thy petitions,' said he, 'be in his name, and none shall be refused.'"

"Did they do so, Minnie?"

"Some did, but others scorned it."

"How much they must have loved this son!" said Nellie.

"Many did, but others laughed at and reviled him."

Gracie looked up from her map, and after a pause, said,—"If I were in that king's place, I'd burn them all up—I would."

"Gracie!" said Laurie, sadly; then brightening up, "I see it all—I see it all, now."

Miriam smiled, but Gracie looked confused.

Miriam noticed it, and said in a low tone, "He that is not with me, is against me, Gracie."

"Did you 'make up' that?" asked Sophie.

"Yes!"

"I am going to write a book one of these days," said Gracie.

"Indeed, Miss Ambition! about what?" asked Minnie, pulling her curls.

"About love, and home, and a darling

sister-mother," answered Gracie, her arm stealing around her sister.

"Look here, sister-mother," said she, turning to her blocks, "I don't know where to put the Gulf of Mexico."

"Why, Goosie, you're putting it west of the United States! it's south—didn't you know it? There! see how nicely it fits."

"Where shall I put Alabama?"

"Here! you don't understand your own country very well, do you? But never mind, Rome wasn't built in a day."

"In how many was it built?"

"It was founded 752 years before Christ," said Nellie.

"I didn't ask you that," said Gracie. "What does Alabama mean, Minnie?"

"It's an Indian name. There was once a tribe of weary, way-worn Indians travelling through an unknown country, when suddenly they espied a beautiful land; and here they stopped, exclaiming, 'Alabama! Alabama!' 'Here we shall rest! here we shall rest!'"

"What a noble race the Indians were," said Sophie; "and how cruel the whites were to chase them from their hunting-grounds, when they really belonged to them!"

"Such a brave race," said Nellie, musingly; "they believed in the Manitou or Great Spirit. It's natural for man to have some kind of religion, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Sophie; "the Hindoo has his Shaster, the Mohammedan his Koran, and we, best of all, the Bible."

"I don't like the heathen," said Gracie, "because our Sunday-school teacher said the widows were burned with their husbands' bodies."

"And the mothers throw their little babies into the Ganges," said Laurie.

"Look here, Minnie," said Sophie, "my foliage doesn't droop so gracefully as yours, and the reflection on the water isn't half so pretty," and Sophie threw down her pencil with a yawn, and looked with a rueful face at the little drawing.

"I will show you," said her sister. "There! that's it!"

"Oh! thank you," said Sophie, in ecstasy; "how easy it seems to you!"

"Practice makes perfect," said Miriam, encouragingly.

"Will you teach me, Minnie?"

"Yes, I'll make time."

"*Make* time!"

"Certainly; we must control circumstances, or they will control us."

Sophie looked puzzled.

IV.

Twilight Chat and Evening Talk.

TWILIGHT was stealing on, always a pleasant hour at Oak Grove. They all gathered around the huge fire-place, and sat thoughtfully watching the flames. Laurie was as usual in Minnie's lap, and Gracie was at her side. The fire-light flickered on the wall, and threw mischievous shadows in the distant corners.

"Do you ever build castles in the air, Minnie?" asked Sophie. The fire-light played over her face, and showed that she was thinking.

"Often!" said Minnie, and she *almost* sighed. She was thinking of this morning.

"Are they ever successful?"

"Very seldom; they are usually built on so slight a foundation, that before the last stone is laid they fall with a crash."

"Is it a bad practice?"

"Generally; it unfits the mind for the more sober duties of life, and we live so much in a castle that we forget we live in a house."

"Do you suppose that every one does it?"

"More or less; yet it's the more imaginative that revel in such delights—a person of Gracie's temperament, for instance."

"Is it very hard to get rid of?"

"We must strive against it as we do against other temptations."

Sophie fell into a reverie.

"I've been reading about Luther to-day," said Nellie.

"Indeed! and how do you like him?"

"Oh! I love him dearly; he was such a great, good man."

"What's the difference, Nellie, between 'great' and 'good?'"

"I don't know, only I think that a person may be called great without being *good*, but a person can't be good without being great."

"Well said, my little reasoner!" said Minnie, smoothing her light, fair hair.

"Well, what of Luther?" said Gracie, impatiently.

"Why, Gracie, he was a poor boy, and used to sing Christmas carols and get paid for it; then he was a monk in a cell; and last of all he turned Protestant, and was called the Great Reformer. He believed almost as the Protestants do, only in transub—sub—sub—what is it?"

"Transubstantiation?"

"What is that?"

"Turning the wafer into the body, and the wine into the blood, of Christ. They take the words, 'This is my body,' and 'This is my blood,' literally."

"What does literally mean?" asked Gracie.

"Why, Gracie, if I should say that you are a good girl and make us all happy at home, I would mean the words I said, that is, literally; but if I should say, 'Gracie is our

sunshine,' that would be figurative. I would mean that your presence has the same effect that sunshine has."

"We take the words figuratively?" inquired Nellie.

"Yes!"

"How the Roman Catholics must tremble when they think they have Christ in their mouths!" said Nellie.

"It would frighten *me*," said Sophie.

"It's best to have Him in our hearts," said Laurie.

They were all silent for a while.

Gracie looked up at Harry Carleton's portrait.

"Tell us something about Uncle Harry, Minnie."

"Yes, do," echoed Nellie and Sophie.

"One day I asked mother about him, but she looked so sad and did not answer me, that I did not ask again," said Sophie.

"There is not much to tell," said Miriam; "when he was about twenty-five he wanted

to marry mother, but she loved father better, and it made Uncle Harry angry with father, and he went off, no one knew where; and it's twenty-five years now since he went away; and no one knows where he is. He was very talented, the smartest one in the family; he was very wild and wayward too, and grandpapa treated him very harshly. He was so proud he couldn't and wouldn't bear it. When he went away he bade only mother good-bye. He said if he ever were good, or did anything worthy of himself, it would be because he loved her so much."

"I wonder if he'll ever come back," said Laurie.

"I'm afraid not, but I hope he will, for I want him to die in the home of his childhood, and be buried in the family ground."

"Father's only brother!" said Sophie; "and he has no sister only Aunt Primrose, and she's only half-sister."

"And an old maid, too," said Gracie—"I hate them!"

"What shall our verse be for to-morrow?" asked Nellie.

"Do you all want the same one?"

"Each have one," said Gracie, "for sometimes Nellie's don't do for me, we're so different."

"Well, Gracie, you take 'Charity thinketh no evil,' and tell me to-morrow how you've exercised it in school."

"What's mine?" said Nellie.

"Yours may be 'Charity seeketh not her own,' as you like your own rights pretty well, I believe."

"I like justice," said Nellie; "doesn't the Bible say 'do justly?'"

"Yes, but '*Charity* seeketh not her own,' and *charity* is *love*."

"Now, *my* text," said Sophie.

"'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'"

"Hark! there's father," said Gracie, as the well-known step of Roanoke was heard, and she ran for the first smile and kiss.

After tea, and when the children were snugly in bed, or the "little birdies in their nest," Gracie said, and Katy had replenished the fire, Minnie blew out the light and said:

"Now for a talk by the fire-light, father!"

"Have you had a pleasant day, my daughter?"

"Delightful, father, in spite of the rain and gloom; we've had sunshine in the house all day.

"'This world is not so bad a world
As some would like to make it,
But whether good, or whether bad,
Depends on how we take it.'"

Mr. Carleton smiled. "Is that your philosophy?"

"Yes; isn't it good? I found something I like in an old newspaper the other day. It was this:

"'For all the evils under the sun,
There is a cure, or there is none:
If there *is* one, try and find it;
If *there isn't, never mind it.*'"

"Very true, Minnie; I hope you will always have such buoyancy of spirits. You will need it to contend with the trials of life."

"*Is* this world such a 'vale of tears,' such a wilderness as people say it is?"

"There is too much truth in such remarks. Miriam, this life is but a probationary existence; this world is but our transitory home; there is much pleasure here, but all is marred with sin. Evil is *always* present; even the face of nature is changed, and does not shine with its primeval loveliness. In some instances, for every joy there is a sorrow; for every smile, a tear."

"And often the reverse, father."

"Yes; some lives seem to be all sunshine, and over others the cloud of adversity seems always to lower."

"Those whom our Father loves he chastens; life can't be desolate if our Saviour smiles upon us."

"True, Miriam, He is a friend that 'sticketh closer than a brother.'"

"'Blessed are the homesick, for they shall get home.' I don't see how a Christian can be otherwise than happy."

"It depends greatly upon a person's disposition, Miriam. Some Christians are of such an affectionate, confiding nature, that they rely implicitly upon their Father's love; others may be as good Christians, yet their desponding feelings may cast a gloom over everything, even religion.

"It is well for us, father, that life does not flow on as smoothly as we wish; for if this world possessed so many attractions, we would never wish to leave it."

"True, Miriam; all is ordered wisely. Even the curse 'By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread,' has proved to be a blessing.

"'Life is real, life is earnest.'

Miriam, we must be active, not drones in the hive. You have your part to act in life,—left at so inexperienced an age, (your whole life

having been devoted to your studies, as foreign to domestic duties as a bird of Paradise in the Arctic ocean,) with four younger children to care for, and to be the light of your father's eye, the pride of his heart, and the sunshine of his home."

"God grant that I may always be that, dear father."

Mr. Carleton drew her closer to him and kissed her with affection, to which he was once a stranger.

"I forgot to tell you, Miriam, that Mr. Pembroke, a young minister, will spend tomorrow night with us. He is the son of an old and valued friend."

"And I must play the agreeable, I suppose," said Minnie, laughing.

"For his father's sake, I would wish him to be well received; as for the son, I'm not much prepossessed in his favor. He's too pedantic."

"Rather an elevation in the region of self-esteem, I should think."

"Precisely!—it's always great *I* and little *you* with him."

"I despise such characters!" said Minnie, heartily.

"Well, my daughter, do the best you can, only don't fascinate the young man, for I'd rather see you here than in a country parsonage."

"Never fear, father. I'll always remain a Vestal for your sake," said Minnie; and gayly bidding him good-night, she sought her room.

Laurie slept with her; he was sleeping sweetly now. Pushing aside his golden curls she kissed him again and again.

"Oh! if he were not blind!" she sighed; "'but God doeth all things well.' Oh! if I could only think so!"

She opened her little Bible, her mother's first gift, in a thoughtful mood. Her eye fell upon the words, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." She repeated the words several

times, adding, "for the sake of Him who died for me, and for my sisters."

A light footstep startled her. She turned and saw Sophie; her eyes were beaming, and her whole face radiant with happiness.

"Why, Sophie, I thought you were asleep!"

"I've not been asleep. I've been waiting for you, to tell you how happy I am," said Sophie, sitting down at her sister's feet.

"I lay thinking for a long time, Minnie. I was thinking of the Saviour, and how much He loved me to die for me. I was thinking of redemption by His blood, and though I knew it all before, it never seemed so plain; light seemed to flow in and flood my mind, and I knew that Jesus died for me. I felt it in my inmost soul, and then I loved Him—oh! so much. Oh! I'm very happy"—tears choked her utterance, and Minnie mingled her tears with hers.

Miriam put her arms around her.

"Now you are indeed my sister, dear, dear Sophie! sisters in the Saviour—all gathered

into the fold but Nellie and Gracie; i
promised mother that I would teach th
"And now you will teach me how
right, and we'll journey onward togeth
"God will teach us both!" said M
humbly.

V.

Childish Poetry.

THE eastern horizon was tinted with the rays of the rising sun as Minnie looked from her window the next morning. She stood enjoying it awhile, and then turned to her writing-desk. No one was stirring, save Katy, and she had a few moments' leisure. "I will write in my neglected journal," she thought.

"March 20th, 18—. Pardon me, dear journal, for neglecting so long so true a friend; to you I can speak unreservedly; you seem like an old friend—one who has known me from infancy.

"I live on, from day to day, happy in father, happy in sisters, and most happy in blind Laurie. I dare not say I love him

best. My mission on earth I strive to perform as God shall give me ability. Not many thorns have as yet been thrown into my pathway, and those few grace has enabled me to remove, or else bear with patience. I live no where regarded but in my own little circle of home; and here so many hearts beat in unison with mine, that I cannot but be happy. I am not beautiful enough to attract attention, or plain and awkward enough to excite pity or disgust. I am not admired, but I hope—loved. I do the best I can, and heavenly aid is rendered me.

"I have interesting books for my daily companions, and flowers, the sweet 'poetry of earth,' in summer and winter. I love my father dearly now, he's changed so much since mother died! He is now the very best of fathers. I get along *more* than nicely with the children,—with thoughtful Nellie, my congenial Sophie, and blind Laurie, very easily. My wild, impulsive Gracie, ever affectionate, and generous to a fault, is not so easily con-

trolled. Her affection for me is her 'guiding star,' she says."

The morning hours were quickly passing, and the children were not ready for school.

"Half-past eight, says the clock," said Minnie.

"Oh! sister Minnie, won't you look for my atlas? I've looked and looked," said Gracie, hurriedly.

"Perseverance conquers, Gracie; remember the old woman who was trying to make a needle out of a crowbar."

"There, I *have* found it! where do you think? in the wood-box!—I'm so careless. Curl my hair, please, then I'm ready."

"Oh! Minnie, sew this button on my satchel first—I'm not half ready," said Nellie, imploringly.

"I'll do it," said Sophie.

"Why, you're not ready yourself."

"No matter, I can hurry better than you can."

"Why, Soph, you're growing good all of

a sudden!" said Gracie, turning towards her.

Sophie felt repaid for her self-denial, by Minnie's approving glance.

"Gracie, *do* hold still," said Minnie; "how shall I ever curl your hair, if you keep moving so?"

"You're as uneasy as a fish out of water!" said Nellie.

"Are *they* uneasy?"

"If you should see one, I guess you'd think so!"

"I'm ready," said Gracie, springing up—"come."

"Not yet," said Sophie; "where's my handkerchief?"

"Sophie! you should have your things all put together, so as to keep you from being tardy."

"I know it, Minnie; I *should* do a great many things."

"When people say they *ought* to do things, and know it's their duty, why don't they?"

asked Nellie, very wisely. She was tying hard knots in her shoestrings.

"Do *you* always do as you ought, Nell?" asked Gracie, mischievously, tumbling her books into her bag.

"Is dinner put up, Minnie?".

"Yes, it's on the kitchen table."

"Run and get it, Laurie, that's a dear little boy!"

"No, Gracie, he can't go quick enough. Suppose you go."

"Suppose I do!" and Gracie ran off.

As Gracie entered the room again, she said,—

"I'll tell you of my plan, Minnie; I wrote on a slip of paper, 'What Gracie does,' and 'What she ought to do;' and when my 'ought-to-dos' are filled up, I put them under the 'does.'"

"I'm afraid you won't fill the 'does' this morning," said Minnie, kissing her; "good-morning."

As Sophie went out, she slipped a piece of

paper in Minnie's hand, saying, "Don't let any one see it."

Miriam stood in the doorway, watching her sisters till they reached the brow of the hill. They turned, took off their gingham sunbonnets, waved them, threw a kiss, and ran on. Minnie stood in the entry and opened Sophie's paper. It read as follows:—

"To Sister Minnie—In Memory of our Mother.

"Gentle as the summer breeze,
When it sighs among the trees;
Gentle as the song-bird's lay—
Thus our mother passed away.

"Placid as the sleeping lake,
When the stars their farewell take;
Calm as moonlight's silver ray—
Thus our mother passed away.

"Brightly as the waters gleam,
Of a far off limpid stream;
Smiling as the flowers of May--
Thus our mother passed away.

"Meekly as a trusting child,
Heard her Father's voice and smiled;
Pleading always, praying aye—
Thus our mother passed away.

"Pearly gates of heaven unclose,
Ending all her transient woes;
Darkness lost in endless day—
Thus our mother passed away.

"SOPHIE."

Minnie's tears fell, and she laughed a little, too. "It shows she loves mother, though there's no merit in the 'verses.' I can't call it 'poetry.'"

When Minnie went down to the kitchen, she found Katy sitting by the stove, the very picture of despair.

"Why, Katy, what *is* the matter?"

"Oh! Miss Minnie, I'm so sick!—sure—I'm dying—I never shall be well again."

"Oh! yes, you will; where have you the most pain?"

"In my face, this side, Miss Minnie. Oh! I'm almost crazy;" and she rocked herself backward and forward with groans of despair.

"Oh! its the neuralgia you have; you've caught cold, I suppose. I will rub your face with this"—taking a large bottle from the

closet. "Lie down a while—you'll be better soon."

"But the ironing must be done, the clothes are all sprinkled, and the strange gentleman coming, and nothing cooked, not even his room fixed. Oh! oh, dear!" said Katy, more despairing than ever.

It *was* rather a dismal picture.

"Never you mind, Katy—leave it all to me; go, bundle off to bed, and while you are taking a snooze, I'll put every thing in apple-pie order."

With a little more coaxing Katy consented, saying, however, "Don't do any thing, Miss Minnie, honey; I'll come down soon."

Minnie and Laurie were left alone in the kitchen. Her prospect of reading to-day, as she had planned, had disappeared, and she bore her disappointment as well as she could.

Her smile vanished as she heard Katy's receding footsteps, and a shade passed over her face as she thought of the day's work,—

sweeping, dusting, cooking, ironing,—all for her inexperienced hands to do.

"I'm not my own—I'm bought with a price—I mustn't be selfish." This thought cheered her.

"I'll do the best I can, said she;" and with a light heart and step she was soon busily engaged.

Laurie played around the room till he was tired, and pussy was tired, too; so he sat down in his little chair, and talked with his sister.

"You don't sing as usual, when you work, Minnie. Why don't you?"

"I was thinking, Laurie."

"Do you like to think?"

"Yes, very much, about some things."

"Of what were you thinking just now?"

"How people may become 'perfect through suffering.'"

"Can they?"

"Yes, if they love the hand that sends the trials."

"Trouble makes us patient, doesn't it?"

"It *ought* to; don't you remember how you used to fret because you were blind? and now you very seldom speak of it."

"I *think* of it, Minnie," said he, in a low tone.

"It will not last for ever, Laurie."

"No! in heaven I shall *see!* Last night I dreamed I was dead, Minnie, and I went to heaven and saw dear mamma there. Jesus was sitting on a throne with a rainbow around it. There were—oh! so many little children there, all singing,

> "'With crowns upon their foreheads,
> And harps within their hands.'

Mamma was so happy! you know I never saw her face before,—but she looked as I *know you* look, Minnie. I asked her if I might stay, and she said, 'Not yet; wait until the flowers come, and the little birds sing again; and when the flowers droop, and the little birds fly away, I'll come for you.' Oh! Minnie! *I wish* she would!"

"Do you want to leave *me*, Laurie?"

"You will come soon, Minnie. You won't miss me, long. I sha'n't go till Jesus comes, Minnie; and when *He* calls, you know I *must* go."

Miriam did not speak to him for more than an hour; her heart was busied with new, strange thoughts.

VI.

The Strange Visitor.

SEVERAL times during the day Minnie went up to Katy's room. About four o'clock she found her quite comfortable; the "agony in her face had gone away," she said, and she insisted upon coming down to finish. Minnie was in no wise reluctant, but glad to be released from her domestic duties. Taking her sewing, she went with little Laurie to the sitting-room. Soon, from the window, she saw her sisters; they were having a fine chase. Gracie's bonnet was swinging in her hand, her black curls dancing in the wind, her cheeks flushed with exercise, and her eyes sparkling with fun. Even the quiet Nellie had joined in the chase: they all ran to the

door, the very picture of health and happiness.

Minnie met them with a smile and a kiss; and, after their clothes were hung away, and they were sobered down a little, they sat down to study to-morrow's lessons.

"Minnie, won't you show me how to do this sum?" said Gracie; "the answer won't come—I don't believe the book is right."

"Do you remember the anecdote of Robert Bruce and the Spider, Gracie?"

"No; what is it?" asked Gracie, eagerly.

"I do," said Nellie; "it was in our history lesson the day you were excused, Gracie. Bruce was at war with the English—one of the Edwards. I think he had been defeated by them twelve times,—and one day was lying in an out-house, almost discouraged, when he saw a spider, who, failing twelve times, succeeded the thirteenth; then Bruce jumped up, saying 'he would try again;' and he did, and gained the victory at the famous battle of Bannockburn."

"That's splendid!" said Gracie—"I'll try again."

"Isn't the thistle the flower of Scotland?" asked Nellie.

"Yes," answered Minnie; "and do you know the cause of it?"

"No; tell us," said Gracie.

"The Scots were at war with a hostile nation; and one night the enemy was very near them, when one of them stepped on a thistle, and the pain was so great, he cried 'Oh!' and the noise betrayed them."

"And so the thistle saved Scotland as the geese saved Rome," said Nellie.

"I've got it! I've got it!" shouted Grace, throwing up her book and slate, while Laurie's head was in imminent danger of being knocked.

"Be careful, Gracie."

"It wouldn't hurt him, only knock arithmetic into him," laughed Gracie.

"Come, now, our *mother* confessor*ess*," said Gracie, "let us tell you about our texts."

"Well, begin, Sophie."

"Well," said Sophie, "at recess to-day, the girls were playing 'Fox and Geese'—a play I like so much! but, as I crossed the room to go out, I saw Maria Henshaw crying over her French exercise. You know how she always teases me, particularly about French! And, Minnie, for a moment—just *one* moment—I was glad; but something whispered, 'Overcome evil with good,' and I lost all my fun to help her; and she was *so* grateful as to ask my forgiveness for her past unkindness."

"So *great-a-fool*, you mean," said Gracie.

"Gracie!" said Minnie, "how can you?"

"I wouldn't ask anybody's forgiveness, I know."

"That's a wrong feeling, Gracie—you must not cherish it."

"Now, whose turn is it?" said Gracie. "Go on, Nellie, you're older than I."

"Why, we're twins!"

"I mean, you're *head's* older!"

"You *are* queer, Gracie. Mine was 'Charity seeketh not her own.' I lost my new History of Rome last week, and this morning I saw Susie Raymond with it; I'm sure 'twas mine, for I saw 'Helen Carleton' partly rubbed out, and I know your Hs, Minnie, they're so pretty. I asked her to let me look at it, and she wouldn't; and then I said 'twas mine and she ran away and said it wasn't. I chased her, and was telling her my mind pretty stoutly, when the thought of my text checked me, and I said, 'If you *think* it's yours, keep it—I can get another.' To-night I found it in my desk, and Susie came along as usual with us as far as her gate."

"Well done, Nellie:—now, my little fly-away?"

"Mine," said Gracie, changing her seat in the middle of the floor for one beside Minnie, —"Mine was 'Charity thinketh no evil,' and a darling one it is. This morning, for a wonder, I was head in geography; you know father promised me that I might take a ride

on our pony the first time I staid head,—and *didn't* I try! The last, the very *last* question, Minnie, came to me,—'What is the capital of Maine?' I was confused, and missed it."

"What is it?"

"Augusta! I sha'n't forget that as long as I've a head on my shoulders! The girl below answered, and of course I lost head. I saw a piece of paper in her hand, and I thought, 'She writes it down—she cheats;' and I was going to tell Miss Grey at noon, when I thought of my text, and wouldn't. I found out afterwards there was nothing on it."

"You did bravely, little Gracie."

Mr. Carleton gave Gracie her ride, but why she never knew.

"There's father!" shouted Gracie, and she was in his arms hugging and kissing him most boisterously, regardless of a tall, red-haired gentleman, who stood looking on in mute surprise.

Mr. Carleton introduced him to Minnie, and she received him with graceful ease and

self-possession. Mr. Pembroke bowed twice, and Gracie said his knees knocked together, trying to be "nice to Minnie."

Minnie soon left the room to make arrangements for tea, and after a few moments Sophie followed her.

As they were setting the table, Sophie said, half-blushingly, "You read my poetry, Minnie?"

"Yes," answered her sister, with a comical look.

"What do—is it—how do you like it?"

"The sentiments very much, Sophie; but you were never cut out for a poetess!"

Sophie colored.

"Forgive me, Sophie—I did not mean to wound your feelings; but," and she smiled, "a desperate disease needs a desperate remedy."

"That's not a disease!"

"Yes, it is! (bring the knife-basket!) it attacks most girls, enthusiastic ones, from your age upwards."

"Do they catch it as they do whooping-cough?"

"No, it comes naturally, I believe," said Minnie.

"Why, Minnie, what are you doing?" said Gracie, who had just come in.

"Counting the noses," said Minnie;—"father one, Mr. Pembroke—"

"Three!" said Gracie—"his counts two, it's so big."

Minnie chased her out of the room, and then resumed her work.

"Did you ever have the 'poetry' fever, Minnie?" asked Sophie, at the same time putting the knives and forks all at one plate.

"I should think so! I was terribly afflicted—it was a year ago; I spent all my leisure for a month on a particular effusion—called 'The Wood Nymph.' I thought, 'Now I shall be grand and famous; every one will admire me, and mother will be so proud of her Minnie!' It was my sole day-dream, and I even dreamed of it at night. At last 'twas

finished, and, oh! how happy I was! I took it to mother, sure of *her* approval. After reading, she burst into a hearty laugh. I was so mortified, I hid my face in her lap and cried; and then she talked to me a long time about my peculiar talents,—what I was fitted for, and what I was not; and how that I should improve the talents given me, and not mourn for others. It did so much good I've never written any since!"

"I suppose you are right, Minnie."

"Don't sigh! suppose that instead of cultivating your own little garden, you should leave that, and begin to dig and plant in the gravel walk!"

"I'll take your advice, Minnie; you always know best."

Grace cam running in again.

"Oh! Minnie, he's *very* tall and *very* stiff, *very* light hair,—red too, *very* light eyes, red whiskers, freckled face, and talks *so* funny. Oh! dear," and Gracie rolled over and over on the mat.

"Call father to tea, Gracie, and *do* try to be good."

As they took their seats at table, Gracie eyed him rather contemptuously. Minnie placed a chair for her by herself,—"Now, Gracie, don't look so!"

"The atmosphere is exceedingly exhilarating, madam," said Mr. Pembroke to Minnie.

The corners of her mouth twitched, but she answered gravely.

"You had a very pleasant drive from the dépôt, Mr. Pembroke," said Minnie, who thought she *must* be agreeable.

"Extremely, Miss Carleton," he answered, passing his cup for the fourth time. "At first our animal (his appellation is Roanoke, I believe,—I think I should prefer Bucephalus) as I was remarking, he was rather refractory at first; but after your paternal ancestor had castigated our quadruped with the utmost severity, he accelerated his speed, and we arrived in little time at this pleasant and hospitable domicile."

"An effect most likely to follow such a course," said Miriam.

"Are you fond of blackberry preserves?" asked Mr. Carleton. His friend answered by bountifully helping himself.

"*Black* berries are *red* when they are *green!*" whispered Gracie.

Mr. Pembroke looked up with such a stare, that Gracie burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. Her father looked displeased, Mr. Pembroke raised his eye-brows, and Minnie, whose eye twinkled with suppressed merriment, came to her relief by saying,—

"Gracie, will you ask Katy for water for Laurie's tea?"

When she left the room, Mr. Pembroke said:

"Your youthful offspring that just left the apartment seems to be *rather* untamed, sir!"

"She has a natural flow of animal spirits which is not easily suppressed, nor do I wish it to be. Do you think she resembles the others."

"Her perpetual movements are such I cannot discern it," answered Mr. Pembroke.

After tea, when Laurie was petting his pussy, Mr. Pembroke said,—

"Are you fond of quadrupeds of the feline species, young man?"

Laurie looked puzzled, and Minnie answered quietly,—

"He loves his kitten very much."

Mr. Carleton said, "Where's Gracie?"

She was sitting demurely in one corner with a large dictionary on her knee, busily turning over its pages.

"What are you looking for, Gracie?"

She blushed, but didn't answer, and cast an arch glance towards Minnie.

"Do you perform upon that instrument?" Mr. Pembroke, asked, turning to Minnie The piano stood open—he glanced at it as he spoke.

"I play for the amusement of my father and sisters, and only a very little."

"Sweet strains of music would much de-

light my auditive organ, if you will so far favor me, Miss Minnie."

"With pleasure, sir!"

Minnie played and sang a few simple home-airs; and when she commenced a favorite hymn, her sisters' sweet, though uncultivated voices mingled with hers.

Mr. Pembroke begged for another, and yet another.

He seemed to be deeply affected, and once or twice his eyes filled with tears. When she left the piano, he said:—

"I thank you—it has been indeed a treat. Many of those hymns were favorites of my mother, and I love them for *her* sake."

Minnie thought, "He *has* got a heart, after all, and *can* talk in suitable language, when he's sincere. Simplicity and sincerity are sisters."

Gracie thought, "Minnie says that the face is the mirror of the soul; what a *mean* soul he must have;" then checking herself, "'Charity thinketh no evil.' Oh! dear, I

wish 'twasn't wicked to make fun of people, —I like to so much."

"We will have prayers, so that the children may retire. Minnie, will you read a Psalm?" said their father.

Minnie's voice trembled when she began, but soon she was lost in what she was reading, she loved so much the writings of the sweet Psalmist of Israel.

Mr. Carleton asked Mr. Pembroke to make the prayer.

When Laurie went up to bed, he said to Minnie, "Do you suppose God likes to hear big words?"

"He looks on the heart, Laurie."

"Yes, I know—but when we are so very earnest, we never think of the words; the publican's prayer was heartfelt, and so simple, Minnie, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'"

"We mustn't judge, Laurie; 'God seeth not as man seeth.'"

"'By their fruits ye shall know them,'"

said Sophie; "how can we know a person is a Christian, if not by his words and actions?"

"We cannot tell the secret motives, Sophie; they may be right before the Searcher of hearts, though they seem ill to us."

VII.

The Young Jewess.

"THE summer days are coming,'" sang Gracie at the top of her voice, and jumping down stairs two at a time, one early June morning.

Minnie was standing in the back balcony, her sunbonnet in her hand, preparatory for her usual morning walk. The balcony was shaded by vines, trained by Mrs. Carleton's own hand. At each end were beautiful summer roses; they climbed through the lattice, and scented the air with their sweet perfume.

Gracie bounded up to her sister, and, after shouting "Good-morning" rather uproariously, hung with her arms around her neck, and kissed her a dozen times, with "one for good measure."

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"There! I'm all out of breath, capering so! but I *do* love to 'carry on,' as people call it.'"

"So it seems," said Minnie. laughing, and arranging her dress, which Gracie's rough greeting had disordered.

"I came down on purpose to see the sun rise, Minnie," said Gracie, a little more soberly, "for it's such a beautiful, beautiful sight! Oh! Minnie, don't you remember the famous statue of Memnon you were telling us about the other day? and that it uttered a sound at the rising of the sun! I think it must have said, 'Oh! how beautiful;' and I don't wonder a bit it spoke, for it's enough to put life into any thing—to those crimson clouds," and she pointed to the eastern horizon. "I should think, Minnie, that the hills would caper, and the 'trees of the fields clap their hands!'"

Minnie smiled. "I hope you will always be as happy, Gracie," and she threw on her bonnet and took the path to the grove, there

to await the arrival of a friend to accompany her on her walk.

Old "Isaac, the Jew," as he was called, lived in a small cottage not far from the grove. His daughter Rebecca was his only companion: five children were sleeping beside his wife, in the burial-ground of the Jews. In Rebecca he seemed to live: he almost worshipped her, and it's hardly to be wondered at, for she was the perfection of girlish beauty. Her face was peculiarly Jewish; her olive complexion, dark, sparkling eyes, and glossy hair, proclaimed that she belonged, unquestionably, to that race chosen and favored by God above all others. Unknown to her father, she was a Christian: she fully believed in Him who "came to His own, and His own received him not." He whom her race despised, the "Man of sorrows," "Jesus the crucified," to Him she bowed the knee as the long expected Redeemer and Restorer of Israel.

Had her father known it, fearful would

have been his wrath; for he was a most bigoted Jew, and hoped to die as he had always lived, in the faith of his fathers.

Miriam waited impatiently for her friend; at last she descried her among the trees. She ran to meet her, and, linking arms, they pursued their walk.

"Why are you so sad this morning, Rebecca?" asked Minnie. She noticed traces of tears on her friend's face, and looked in vain for her wonted smile.

"Oh! Minnie, if you only knew how I feel!" and she burst into tears.

"'Hope on, hope ever,' Rebecca."

"Oh! Minnie, how can I? He does not know of my change of faith, and last night he was speaking of the Saviour in such a way that my blood ran cold, and I said: 'Oh! father, *don't*.' He gave me *such* a look, and said: 'I would rather see you, my child, a corpse at my feet, than a believer in that vile impostor.' What could I do, Minnie, but go away and pray? I never deceived my father,

before, and now it preys upon me, and takes away my pleasure in almost every thing."

"How long is it since you were converted?"

"Two years. I was visiting an old schoolmate, at M——. I was there three months. Her brother was just entering the ministry; he talked to me so earnestly, reasoned so convincingly, and proved it from our own Bible, too, that I could not but believe. He asked me to be his wife; but how could I leave my old father, Minnie? I love *him* best, but my duty to my father compelled me to say no."

"Have you never heard from him since?"

"No! I begged him not to write, much as he wished it; it would grieve father, as well as vex him. Every summer since, they've invited me, but I did not trust my heart enough to go."

There was a pause. "Yesterday was my twenty-first birthday," said Rebecca.

"Indeed! I did not think you were so old. *My* seventeenth was last month."

"I'm glad I'm growing old. I welcome every rising sun, as a day that brings me nearer my last home."

"Don't, Rebecca!"

"How thankful I ought to be that the 'lost sheep' may return to the fold, and that the Good Shepherd will receive us! If our people would only turn again to Him whom they pierced! They are now scattered over the whole earth, and are become a by-word and reproach, and they never can be restored to their first home till they acknowledge their sins. Oh! Minnie, other nations have a home; but ours, like the Master they reject, has no abiding place.

"'We must wander witheringly
In other lands to die,
For where our fathers' ashes be,
Our own can never lie.'

"If I could only tread in the steps my Saviour trod; if I could see the waters of 'deep Galilee,' the ancient cedars of Lebanon, the

mount of Olives, and, above all, Mount Calvary, where the Lamb was slain and the plan of redemption finished, I should be so happy! If I could have been one of the Messiah's disciples, have leaned on His breast and listened to His words, I would have wished nothing more. I would have bathed His feet with tears and wiped them with my hair, like the penitent Magdalen."

"It's an ardent wish of mine, too, to visit the Holy Land. It may be gratified. Who knows?"

They now reached the top of the hill, and stood looking at the glorious sunrise. The morning clouds were blushing with joy to greet the sun's reappearance. The east was flooded with golden light, and the waves of the distant sea rose and fell in the bright beams, and shone like melted gold.

"How gloriously beautiful!" said Rebecca, in an ecstasy of delight.

Minnie said nothing, but her eyes sparkled with intense excitement.

They stood awhile, and then walked downward in silence.

Rebecca broke the silence by saying,—

"How beautiful the Garden of Eden must have been before the fall."

"Sin had not marred earth's beauties then."

"I know it," and she passed her hand over her brow, and her face grew thoughtful.

Rebecca clasped Minnie's hand, and held it tight in hers; then dropping it, she said, earnestly,—

"Pray for me, Minnie, that I may have more faith."

"Let us pray together in the grove. We sha'n't be disturbed, it's so early."

They walked onward to the grove, and there, under an old tree, knelt. They both prayed, each separately and aloud. When they arose, Rebecca's face had regained its usual pleasant expression, and Minnie's wore a look of quiet happiness and serenity. Miriam could not forbear saying,—

"How beautiful you are, Rebecca."

"Yes!"—a shade passed over her face—"and very sorry am I too."

"Sorry! *I* should rejoice."

"Oh! no, Minnie; beauty of mind and heart is much more desirable. Beauty is a snare, Minnie; be content with what you have, and thankful you have no more," she answered, earnestly.

"I should be more loved, perhaps, were I prettier."

"Not a bit of it! *admired*, but not *loved*. You would not be so worthy of it. Admiration would content you. You would care more for your face than your mind. I've lately learned how useless my beauty is."

"Well, I won't murmur. Good-morning."

"Good-morning."

And they parted,—Minnie to her happy home, and Rebecca to the little cottage among the trees, of which she was the joy.

"I wonder why people are made so different," thought Minnie, as she walked home-

ward. "All are fitted for some purpose, though nothing is made in vain. Our early education,—for every thought tends to educate, I suppose—is to fit us for the duties of life. How I would love to take a peep into the future! I wonder what my discipline now is fitting me for. No matter; I'll take care of the present.

"'Heart within and God o'erhead?'"

"You look as blooming as a new-blown rose," was Mr. Carleton's greeting, when Minnie appeared at the breakfast-table.

"Say a sun-flower with the dew on it," said Gracie, mischievously.

"What a bump of comparison you have, Gracie. Here," putting his hand on her forehead, "let me scientifically examine it."

But Gracie playfully shook his hand off, and, after pinching Nellie and pulling the cat's tail, took her seat at the table.

"Why, Gracie Carleton," said her father, with mock gravity, "is it possible that my

little sober-sides has been cutting up such antics? Why, what do you think you'll ever be in the world?"

"Perhaps my life may be a song, perhaps a sermon!" returned Gracie, gayly.

Breakfast and prayers over, the children ran for the garden. Mr. Carleton detained Gracie, and stroking her dark hair said, "I hope, my little Gracie, your life will be neither a song nor a sermon, but a happy combination of the two!"

"It *will* be happy, don't fear!" and Gracie tripped away, singing a merry song.

"It's such natures as hers that are most easily borne down by sorrow; her spirits are easily depressed, and as easily rise again."

"We must not fear for our darling, father. Let her enjoy life while she may, and pray that 'coming events may not cast their shadows before.'"

"What a true woman you'll make, my daughter," said her father, kissing her. "Good-morning."

That afternoon was a half holiday; and Minnie, to make it more pleasant to her sisters, had prepared to surprise them—a little feast to be eaten in the arbor. They were in high glee at dinner, each planning for the afternoon. Sophie and Nellie were going to enjoy it with Minnie, they said; but Gracie said, coaxingly,—

"Oh! Minnie, let me go to sail with a party of school-girls. A big brother is going to take care of the boat, and he's a sailor, too. There's such a nice breeze, Minnie! Please let me go, and I'll love you all my life."

It was hard to resist that pleading voice and those speaking eyes; yet Minnie kindly but firmly refused her permission.

"It's not best, dear Gracie. Father is the one to ask; I dare not trust you, Gracie. We will be very happy at home. I won't work at all, but will give my whole time to you."

Gracie jumped from the table, her eyes flashing with anger.

"I *will* go, Minnie Carleton; I say I *will!*

You've no right to make me stay! You're not my mother; and I don't love you, not one bit!"

"I act in mother's place, Gracie, and if you love her"—Gracie was gone. She almost flew from the house, and was soon out of sight.

The others knew nothing of the sail. It was planned among the wildest girls in school.

"She will not go," thought Minnie. However, she was uneasy, and sending her sisters and Laurie down into the garden, promised soon to join them. She wandered all through the house, looking out at every window; at last to her great relief she saw her running towards the house, and she hastened to the door to meet her. Gracie burst into tears, and, flinging her arms around her neck, sobbed aloud.

"Dear Gracie, darling, what is it?"

"Oh! Minnie, will you ever, ever forgive me for being so naughty to you? I knew I

was wrong all the time. They teased me to jump into the boat, and I wouldn't. I *do* love you, *dear* Minnie! I do, I do. Will you love me again? won't you try?" And the little penitent hid her face, and sobbed again.

"Dear Gracie," said Minnie, smiling through her own tears, "I love you more than ever."

"Are you *sure?*"

"Yes, *very* sure."

"And forgive me too?"

"With all my heart, little sister!"

Gracie ran up stairs, bathed her face, and went with Minnie to the garden. She looked a little sad, but very happy.

"*Gracie!*" said both her sisters at once.

"Yes, I'm here," said she, throwing herself on the grass; "and what's more, I—" and she colored—"asked Minnie's pardon."

"*You*, Gracie!" said Sophie.

"Yes, *I!* Gracie Carleton. I believe in it now, and in being forgiven, too," she added, smiling to herself.

Sophie took up a book; Gracie went off in search of flowers; Nellie made dandelion curls; and Laurie sat by Minnie. Gracie returned with the flowers; and, while she was arranging them among Minnie's braids, Laurie asked,—

"Are they very pretty? They smell so sweetly, they must be."

"Beautiful, Laurie, as is everything that God has made."

"Let's make a wreath," said Sophie, throwing down her book, "and crown a queen of the festival."

"Yes! yes!" and they ran for flowers.

"Let Minnie make it, she twines them all so prettily."

"Who'll be queen?" asked Laurie.

"Gracie," proposed Minnie, "for her trying to do right."

"Oh! *no! no!* Minnie; not to-day, when I've been so wicked," said she, earnestly.

"I think you're best of all," said Sophie, "naturally, I mean; we try hard to be good,

and you don't, and sometimes you beat us *without* trying."

"Let's crown Laurie," said Gracie, "it will look so pretty over his curls."

"Then he'll be *king!* Well! well!"

After it was made, Gracie put it on him.

"There, Laurie, you're as pretty as you can be. You and I are the only pretty ones in the family," she added, gravely.

"Why, Gracie!" said Nellie.

"People can't help knowing that they're pretty. I'm sure I don't care whether I am or not," said Gracie.

"Of course, Gracie; only you mustn't be vain," said Sophie, quietly.

"I ain't, a bit. I don't want people to tell me I'm pretty. I often wish my hair was as straight as a—a—candle."

"Flowers are not proud," said Laurie, "and they're prettier than any of us."

"Isn't this a sweet rose?" said Gracie. "I'll tell you why I like the rose: because after they're withered their leaves are sweet;

and so, when I'm dead I want my friends to love me, and my good deeds to live longer than I do."

"That's if you have any," said Nellie.

"I *may* be good one of these days, who knows?"

The afternoon passed pleasantly; and just when everything was prepared for their rural tea, their father came, and his presence made it pleasanter.

The next day the village was filled with consternation: of all the sailing party, but one remained to tell of the sad end of her schoolmates. Many hearts were bereaved, and many happy homes made desolate.

Gracie cried for hours after she heard of it; and Minnie cried for gratitude.

VIII.

Communion Sunday.

IT was a beautiful Sabbath, so beautiful that as Minnie looked from her window she thought, "It is a fitting day for our communion." That beautiful Sabbath morning, Mr. Carleton, Minnie, and Sophie were to unite with the village church. They had, as they trusted, been received into the church above; and now they wished to make a profession of their faith, and to be received into the church's full communion here. It was a season of unwonted religious excitement in the village; and many, particularly of the young, had taken up the cross to follow the Saviour. It was a hard trial to Rebecca. She longed to join the youthful throng, and profess her faith in the Messiah. She was several times almost de-

termined to reveal her secret to her father; but she feared the effect, not for herself, but for her father. She knew the time *must* come, and speedily, for she was wasting away with her mother's disease,—consumption.

It was indeed a happy day to the Carletons, when Minnie arose from her knees, after having received the mystical tokens of the body and blood of her crucified Saviour. Her face was almost radiant with joy. She had been in silent communion with Him who loved her and gave Himself for her. She had taken up her cross, to bear it through all the eventful scenes of life, and then when life was over she hoped to render up her account with joy, and receive the believer's crown. They were all silent, as they left the church and turned into the footpath that led homeward. Mr. Carleton seemed lost in thought; and Sophie's varying expression and downcast eyes showed that her thoughts, too, were busy. That they were of a pleasant nature, the frequent smile indicated. Her arm was

linked in her sister's. She looked up; Minnie's eyes were filled with tears.

"What is it, sister?"

"Nothing. I was thinking, and the tears *would* come."

"As I was leaving the church, Minnie, Susie Raymond whispered to another girl: 'Sophie Carleton has joined the church; I suppose she'll set up for a saint now, more than ever.'"

"You mustn't mind it, Sophie; our Master was persecuted and reviled, and shall not we bear a little inconvenience for His sake?"

"Oh! yes, but I felt the warm blood in my face; it was so unkind."

"I hope she will one day be one of the 'saints,' herself."

"Minnie! don't you think people will watch us more closely now? and what is thought trifling for others, will be called a sin for those who call themselves Christians?"

"Very likely, Sophie, but we must pray that we may not disgrace our profession. We

are not our own; 'we are bought with a price, the blood of the Lamb, without spot or blemish;' we must let others see that we've 'been with Jesus, and learned of Him.'"

Sophie walked slowly, as if pondering her sister's words. At last she said,—

"There's a beauty in your daily life, which makes my own look ugly."

"You must take the Saviour for your pattern, dear Sophie! and not your frail, erring sister."

Mr. Carleton was listening to his children.

"They have truly been kept 'unspotted from the world,'" he thought. "O that I had given my heart to God at their tender age! But the morning and noon of my life have been spent in worldliness; and now, when my faculties are decaying, I devote the worn-out remnant to my Creator. Under what blind infatuation do men labor! Would that my sainted Miriam could see this day!"

Gracie met them at the gate, and taking

Minnie's hand, walked with her to the house.

"What makes you look so glad, Minnie?"

"I'm very happy, Gracie."

"Oh! dear, I'd *kind* of like to be good! I've more temptations than other folks. My foes are all within, Minnie!"

"Do you know what a besetting sin is, Gracie?"

"Yes—one that sticks to us; mine is my 'unruly member.' My *fore-thoughts* come *afterwards*, Minnie!"

"What was your text to-day?"

"'Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy,' and I've broken it already!"

"I'm sorry, Gracie, *very* sorry! You can tell me about it after dinner!" said Minnie, as they passed through the hall.

"Now, Minnie," said Gracie, after they had finished dinner, and were sitting on the balcony, half concealed by the running vines, "you must let me tell you how I behaved this forenoon."

"Well, begin."

Gracie stood pulling off the roses and picking them to pieces, their leaves falling in rosy showers on Laurie's head. She blushed and hesitated.

"I suppose I might as well tell you at once. You know

"'A fault confessed
Is half redressed.'"

"Well!" said her sister, smiling.

"You know you told me this morning, when you started for church, *not* to read 'Robinson Crusoe,' and I made up my mind that I wouldn't; but, going to the library, I saw it where I left it last night, open too! I was just interested in the man Friday, and I thought I'd take one peep; and I got so interested that I forgot what day it was. By and by Nellie came in, and *such* a scolding as she gave me! and we were in the midst of a debate when I saw you coming, and ran to meet you."

Minnie looked sad.

"Will you forgive me, Minnie?" Gracie whispered.

"Will *God* forgive you, Gracie?" asked Minnie, in the same low tone.

She burst into tears—"Will *you* ask Him?"

"Go to your room, and, dear Gracie, if you are *really* sorry, He will listen."

"I am, Minnie, *really*."

Minnie kissed her, and Gracie walked slowly away.

"What are you reading, Nellie?"

"'Pilgrim's Progress,'" said she, looking up with sparkling eyes. "Oh! it's *so* beautiful! I wish 'twas really true."

"So it is, in one sense."

"I know that—it is an allegory; but I wish it was just as it says."

"Would you go on the journey, then?"

"Indeed I would!"

"We can now go on in the journey of life, with three sisters for our attendants Who are they?"

"Faith, Hope, and Charity," replied Sophie.

"I'm so young, Minnie!'

"'Of *such* is the kingdom of heaven,' Nellie."

Nellie looked thoughtful; she closed her book, and walked up and down the piazza with her hands folded behind her.

"Are you going to church this afternoon?" asked Sophie, as the sound of the Sabbath bell floated through the still air.

"No! don't," said Laurie; "won't you stay with me?"

"You go with father, Sophie,—Gracie don't want to; and Nellie has a headache. I will stay with them."

"Well!" and Sophie ran up stairs to get ready.

After Sophie and her father were gone, Laurie said, "Come into the parlor, Minnie, and sit down on the sofa; I want to go to sleep with my head in your lap!"

Minnie did as he wished, and the curly

head was nestled in her lap, and the blue eyes soon fast asleep.

The parlor was very pleasant that summer afternoon. Through the half-closed blinds came in the fragrance of the flowers, and the subdued summer light; even the flies seemed to have a Sunday buzz. Minnie was very happy; she sat there with a book in her hand, partly closed, but her thoughts were of the morning.

Gracie sat with her chin on the window thinking,—something uncommon for her to do. Suddenly she started up and said,—

"Ask us Bible questions, Minnie."

"Well, which is the oldest book in the world?"

"The Bible," said she, sitting down by Minnie.

"Who wrote the Bible, Nellie?"

"Different persons, I suppose."

"Yes, but God told them how," said Gracie.

"Who wrote the first five books?"

"Moses."

"What is the first one called?"

"Genesis," said Nellie.

"What does that mean?"

"I don't know—tell us."

"It means *beginning*, because it tells of the Creation."

"What does Exodus mean?" asked Gracie.

"Going out, or the Departure."

"Of whom?" asked Gracie.

"Nellie knows," said Minnie, as she saw her face light up.

"Yes, the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt."

"The next book is what?"

"Leviticus."

"Why so named?"

"Because it tells about the priests, I think," said Nellie; "they were Levites, or sons of Levi."

"Why is the fourth book called Numbers?"

"Because the people were numbered; I've read about it in my Bible," said Gracie.

"Now tell us a Bible story," said Laurie, who had been listening for some time.

She then told them of Joseph, of his old father who loved his son so much, of his cruel brothers, and of his slavery and imprisonment in Egypt, of his rising to be second in the kingdom, of his kindness to his brothers, and of the affecting interview between the old father and his long-lost son.

Then they begged for another; and she told them of the Hebrew mother who hid her infant son by the river-side, of the princess finding and adopting him as her son, of the burning bush, his frequent interviews with the Creator, and of all his eventful life, and finally of his dying alone upon the mountain-top in sight of the Promised Land.

Laurie begged for *just one* more; and Minnie told them of the shepherd boy, of his being anointed king by the prophet, of his killing the giant with his sling, his fleeing

from the reigning king's anger, of his friendship for the young prince; and lastly, of his being king, of his beautiful son, and of that son's death; of the sweet psalms he wrote. And then she chose some of her favorites and read to them.

They all thanked her with a kiss, and Minnie felt more than repaid.

When Minnie laid her head on her pillow that night, she felt that it was the happiest day she had passed for a long, long time.

IX.

Minnie's Friend.

THUS passed the long summer days, every day the scene of some new conflict, some new conquest, in the hearts of our two young soldiers of the cross. Minnie and Sophie persevered in the path of duty, and, though often disheartened, prayed and took sweet counsel together, and thus helped each other on.

Sophie's piety seemed almost as matured as Minnie's, for Minnie had many obstacles to contend against, of which Sophie knew nothing. Her position in the family was one of peculiar trial. Every thing must be guided by her. She was head and hands for all; and, with Sophie's assistance, she did all the sewing and mending. Gracie would, in trifles,

it is true, sometimes displease her; but as soon as she saw her error she would generously acknowledge it, and Minnie always felt that she loved her wayward, affectionate sister better after her transgressions. But Minnie had many days of trial, many hours of sorrow, and would often weep herself to sleep, and cry, "Oh! my mother, why were you taken?" But such days were far between. Her disposition was to make the best of every thing; and, with Sophie's hearty coöperation, and her father's kind encouragement, her duties became lighter, and she forgot little disagreeables in the sweet intercourse of home.

One afternoon, in August, Laurie begged for a walk. Her sisters were at school; and, after giving Katy the necessary orders for tea, and calling to Rover, they set out.

Minnie gathered the flowers that were climbing over the hedges, and fancifully arranged them in Laurie's light summer hat. She told him stories of the birds and of the flowers, till he said,—

"Don't tell me any more, Minnie; I love to hear you, but it makes me feel bad because I can't see them too.

"I'm tired!" said he, after a while. "Let us sit down under this tree, it is so shady here!"

Minnie took off his hat, and the wind played with his light curls. A little bird lit on a bough near them, and sang her sweetest song.

"Listen! oh, how sweet! is it pretty, Minnie?"

"Very pretty, Laurie; it seems so happy, too, flitting from bough to bough. It's singing for you, Laurie."

"God makes the little birds sing! Do you suppose He loves to hear them?"

"Yes, Laurie, and He made the flowers that grow far away in the woods, where no human eye can see them. A traveller was once crossing a desert; he was almost discouraged, he was so thirsty and weary, and he sat down to die,—when suddenly he saw,

in the crevice of a rock, a little flower, all alone, and he thought, 'God loves that little flower, and cares for it; will He not much more care for me?' and, strengthened by the thought, he pressed onward and reached the end of his journey in safety."

"How very pretty," said Laurie. "I like the flowers, because they seem like God's smile. If God is high and holy, He does love little things."

"Yes, indeed! I remember of reading once, though I've partly forgotten it, that God sent an angel to the earth to bring him a gift. The angel came and took the richest treasures of earth, but they were not accepted; he dived into the ocean and brought the fairest pearls, but they, too, were refused,—and the angel came again. He saw an aged sinner, weeping over the Bible, because of his errors; the angel caught a tear, took it to Jehovah, and *that* was accepted. So you see, Laurie, the tear of penitence is of more value than much riches!"

"Yes! Minnie—

"'Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
Vainly with gold would His favor secure;
Richer, by far, is the heart's adoration,
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor!'"

Minnie busied herself in arranging the flowers she had gathered, for her father; and after a while, she said softly,—

"What are you thinking of, Laurie?"

His voice trembled as he replied: "It will make you sad if I tell you, Minnie. I was thinking of my dream, and wondering, now that summer was passing, if mamma would come for me!"

Minnie had noticed that he was growing paler every day; that he often coughed, and did not play as much as usual. He had not seemed well since their mother had died.

"We will go, Laurie," and, taking his hand, they walked silently homeward.

Gracie met them at the gate—"A letter, a letter, Minnie," she shouted. She was almost out of breath, as she handed the "white-wing-

ed messenger" to her sister. The children ran forward, and Minnie walked slowly, reading the letter as she went. It was written in a small, fair hand, and read as follows:—

"ELDERBANK, AUGUST 4TH, 18—.

"DEAREST MINNIE:—Have you forgotten your old school-friend, and aren't you going to ask her to come and visit you? I want to see you, Minnie, and have a talk as of old; it would do me good, 'my guardian angel,' as I used to call you in the happy days of 'Auld Lang Syne.'

"Oh! the happy days at B—— seminary! and our dear, dear teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett! How often have I laid my head in her lap, and sobbed out all my griefs, some fancied slight, perhaps, and she would soothe me with the words she knew best how to use, and talk to me until the wound was healed, and I felt stronger for the conflict! I always left her with a clearer idea of my duty, and was really *better* for days after such an interview. She was just the person for the

head of such an establishment, just the one to win the hearts of her pupils! And Mr. Bartlett, too, how I reverenced him for his superior learning, and loved him for his kindness! He was the first one, Minnie, that ever told me the truth about *myself*. Other teachers had always flattered me—my talents for composition, particularly; but he made me *know myself*. It was humbling enough, but I shall always be grateful to him for it, and then I *began* to learn. How much I feared him, too, there was so much quaint sarcasm in the glance of his eye; and even his tone has made me tremble!

"I'm coming to spend a few days with you, Minnie, if you'll let me; I can stay but a week, for mother is going to take a trip to Bath, and wishes my company. Brother Ralph will come and take me home, and then you can see him, Minnie. Do you remember how often I used to talk of him at school? I'm sure you must quite know him now—my dear, noble brother! He's *rather* wild, Min-

nie, but he's just out of college, and only sowing his 'wild oats.' I often tell him I hope he'll never *reap* them!

"I'm in the most fashionable society, and own I am rather too dissipated,—but it is all for mother's sake; she's very proud of her only daughter, though I'm sure she has no reason to be! I'm heartily sick of such a life; there is a void in my heart that such pleasures can't fill. O, Minnie, for a quiet talk with you! you could lead me back to the path I've so long forsaken. I long to return to my Saviour again, if He will receive the poor wanderer.

"Pray for me, Minnie, for I'm sadly in need of your prayers.

"I will be with you in two days after the reception of this.

"With the fondest love, your friend,

"ANNA MERTON."

For the next day and a half every thing was in confusion; all were seeking to make their country home attractive to their young

visitor. The children were overjoyed at the prospect of seeing the school-friend of whom they had heard so much,—and their father was glad too, for Miriam's sake; she needed a companion to relieve the monotony of her home-life.

Minnie thought the hours were much longer than the usual sixty minutes, as the time for Anna's arrival approached. She strained her eyes to catch the least glimpse of a carriage in the distance, and sent Gracie at least a dozen times running down the lawn to take a peep over the gate, as she fancied she heard the rumbling of carriage wheels.

The time passed slowly.

"Suppose she shouldn't come!" said Minnie, doubtingly.

"Set the clock ahead!" suggested Gracie.

Minnie paid no attention to this remark—she was *sure*, now; and, flying over the lawn, she soon clasped her friend in a warm embrace.

"Dear Anna!"

"Dear Minnie!"

Anna Merton was a tall, graceful girl, and dressed with much taste. There was an air of elegance and refinement about her, that made her peculiarly attractive.

The children crowded around her, eager to see Minnie's friend; she had a kiss and a playful word for all. "I know you all," said she; "the oldest one is Sophie, and these are the twins—the blue-eyed, quiet one is Nellie, and that little black-eyed elf is Gracie; and where is little Laurie, your little blind pet, Minnie?"

"Here!" said Laurie, coming forward.

"Darling!" and she clasped him in her arms.

"Will you try and love me, too, Laurie?"

"I love you already, your voice is so sweet!"

The sisters were all delighted with Anna, and, while Minnie was busy, took her all around the garden, and into the orchard, and showed her every flower and curiosity

the place afforded. They took her to their mother's grave in the family burial-ground, which was not far from their home. Anna paused before the chaste monument, on which was simply written:

"Our Mother
Sleeps in Jesus."

Neither spoke, and they turned away in silence.

The little ones begged an hour in the evening, so that they might sit by her and listen to her pleasant stories. Gracie said she had "fallen in love" with Anna, and stood by her, with arm around her, and watched the ever-varying expression of her bright face.

Anna joined in the evening prayer with earnest devotion. There was no praying circle in her own home; no morning and evening sacrifice was offered at their family altar. There was no such bond of love between herself and parents as seemed to unite the Carletons;—they were happy in their home

here, and hoped to be more happy in a home above; they were all looking forward to that rest, and loved to talk of it by the way.

When the two girls were alone in their room, Anna said, "I suppose you read and pray at night, Minnie; will you not let me join you?"

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure, Anna; but first, let us sit down by the open window, and talk awhile in the moonlight, as we used to do at B——."

"I want to tell you about myself, Minnie. When I first left school, I was sure I would not be ashamed at home to *act* out my Christian principles. I had so much confidence in *myself* that I did not fear; and, Minnie, the very first Sunday I gave way. I stayed from church in the afternoon because the others did. Father asked for music; I went, misgivingly, to the piano, and played and sang a sacred piece.

"'Is that all you learned at B——?' said father. 'That's too tame; give us some

thing lively!' I longed to say, 'Father, I can't,' but could not summon resolution. I forgot to ask for strength. I played many pieces, and sang him some songs; at last, my voice trembled—I pleaded a headache, and went to my room and wept till dark. After that I grew more lax; even your letters, Minnie, could not revive my love of sacred things, till the last; and then I knew you suspected something. Minnie, I cried two hours over that letter, and determined to return to the Saviour I had so long neglected. *Will* He receive me, Minnie?"

Minnie made no answer. She opened her Bible, to read aloud the parable of the Prodigal Son—then knelt, and prayed for Anna.

When she arose, Anna's face was the only answer she sought;—the *lost* was *found.*

When Minnie was half asleep, Anna said, "Tell me of your mother, Minnie."

Minnie was fully aroused.

"If an angel ever lived on earth, 'twas my mother," said Minnie; "always the same,

trusting in our Father's love—a steady, sincere, unwavering Christian. Oh! Anna, we almost worshipped her. I felt as if my breath was gone when she was taken,—I was *so* unhappy when she died. Every thing reminded me of the absent one: her work-basket, her unfinished work, and her Bible, left open where she last used it. Father sleeps in her room, now; the Bible is still the same—he's never disturbed it. She marked a verse—it was this: 'In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.' 'My husband and children' is marked on the margin. Before father was converted, I often used to see that passage wet with tears.

"It was in the autumn, too, that mother died, the saddest season of the year. Father looked pale and stern; the little ones subdued, they knew not why. Oh! it was indeed hard to bear. I remember so well the

morning after she died. Katy called us, as usual, to breakfast. Father came down, and took his seat at the foot of the table. I had sat at the head during her illness, and, of course, that did not seem so strange. The children sat down; they didn't know what to do! I began to pour the coffee, when father groaned aloud and left the room. I burst into tears, and Sophie looked up so imploringly, and whispered,—'We all depend on you, sister.' With a great effort I *did* command myself, and, while helping them, spoke cheerfully. I could see them brighten up in a moment: *then* I knew what my mission was, and I've kept the 'happiness of home' as my motto ever since!"

"What a sweet home you have, Minnie, and you preside over it with so much grace!"

"Hush! flatterer!" and Minnie put her hand playfully over her friend's mouth.

Then followed a long conversation of home, and school-days, and school-friends.

The old clock in the hall struck one.

"Good-night," said Anna, in a sleepy tone.

There was no response, for Minnie was fast asleep.

X.

Chit-Chat.

IT rained the next day, and there was no going out, at least not for pleasure. Sophie, Nellie, and Gracie rode with their father to school, and the friends hoped to have a long, quiet day to themselves. Miriam stayed a few minutes in the kitchen, and then went to the library to find Anna sitting in one of the deep bay windows, with Laurie on her lap.

"Bring your work, Minnie," said Anna, gayly, "and we'll have a delightful chat.

Minnie brought her work-box, and soon her needle was flying busily in and out, but her tongue was busier still."

"Have you ever heard from Clara Howard?" asked Minnie.

"Yes, several times; she's in Europe now. How much she must enjoy it. She wrote me

a long letter about London. She's visited Westminster Abbey, the Tower, St. Paul's Cathedral, Windsor Castle, etc., etc. She wrote in fine spirits."

"Do you remember Minnie Moffatt?"

"Yes, Minnie, but she's dead! And Ella Mayfield, who left before we did, you know, married a minister, and is settled in a country parsonage. Our quiet, gentle Ella! I always loved her, Minnie. How shy and reserved she was until fully acquainted! Her husband has a real treasure; she was always a Christian, I believe. I never could find even *one* fault in her!"

"The last I heard of Maria Davenport, she was as sensible and fond of mathematics as ever. What an influence she had in school!"

"Yes; she'll make a sterling woman, and do much good. She had so much determination, I often envied her.

"You have not told me of your home-friends, Minnie!"

"I have but very few, I'm so much confined at home, and I'm as choice as ever in my selection of friends. I want them to be wiser and older than I; and I can't always find those two requisites. I am most intimate with a young Jewess; she is very beautiful, and talented. She lives with her old father, in that pretty cottage on the road from S——. She is a sincere, humble Christian, Anna, well educated and refined. Her father has spared no pains nor expense in her education; and she is the light of his home, and he is so fond and proud of his beautiful Rebecca."

"Is he a Christian?"

"No, a Jew yet in religion, and always will be. It troubles and worries Rebecca a good deal; also, her secrecy in regard to her own change of faith."

"Then she dares not tell him?"

"No, and it makes her very unhappy."

"Am I too heavy for you, Anna?" asked Laurie.

"No, Laurie. Do you wish to get down?"

"I'll go down stairs and stay with Katy awhile. She tells me funny stories."

"Well, kiss me first," and Laurie got down and went towards the door.

"Shall I go with you?" asked Minnie.

"Oh! no," and he was gone.

"Did you ever go into a Jewish Synagogue?"

"No, Minnie; did you ever?"

"I've often thought I would like to. They are a peculiar people, these Jews. Do you know, Anna, they never pronounce the word *Jehovah;* and when the word is copied in their MSS. it is written with a new pen, and the pen never afterward used?"

"How strange! how do they translate it?"

"They substitute *Lord* instead. Jehovah is of such dread significance, they dare not take it upon their lips. So I've heard."

"Minnie, are you ever dissatisfied with yourself?"

"Often, Anna. Sometimes it seems as if I never *could* do right."

"Do you ever long to do a great deal of good in the world?"

"Sometimes I am so ambitious. At night I always think over what I've done during the day, and often say, with the good emperor of Rome, 'Oh! I've lost a day!'"

"But, Minnie, you can't feel as I do. You fill your niche, and I *can't find mine.* I go on, day after day, with the same feeling of dissatisfaction, *knowing* that I'm a mere cipher, only put in to fill up an otherwise vacant space. What *shall* I do, Minnie, to make my home as happy as yours?"

"*Ours* is a Christian household, Anna."

"Yes, that's it; but, Minnie, what can *I* do?"

"Exert all the influence you can. I'm afraid, dear Anna, that you're

"'Ashamed of Jesus!'"

"I *have* been!" said Anna, in a low tone, "but I will be no more."

There was a long pause.

"Minnie," said Anna, "you don't know what it is to be tried as I've been. You are encouraged; but everything at home tends to take my mind from sacred duties. My parents do not oppose religion; they are negative. My mother taught me to say 'Our Father,' but that's all the religious instruction I've ever had at home. I was sent to Sunday-school as a matter of course, and sometimes to church. My mother has always been very gay, my father immersed in business. At *school* I learned all I know of religion."

"And now, Anna dear, you must make the others *respect* your religion by *your* continuance in well-doing."

"That's easier said than done," said Anna. "*Three* against one is too strong."

"*You* are not alone, Anna."

"Minnie, I *will* try; will you pray for me?"

A silent pressure of her hand was Minnie's answer.

The next day was pleasant, and the friends took a long ramble together, Laurie staying with his good friend Katy, as he could not bear the fatigue of a long walk. They came home in a few hours laden with treasures—mosses, and flowers, and shells—and all the afternoon studied botany and conchology over them.

Anna begged to be included in the twilight talks, and none felt her presence a restraint.

Sunday morning they all went to the little village church. The sermon was addressed particularly to the young. The text was, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me *early* shall find me."

Gracie sobbed all through the exercises.

"Dear Gracie," said Minnie, when they were alone, "will you try to love the Saviour?"

"I can't help crying, Minnie; I *must* cry. I didn't feel it any more than Nellie did, only I show it more."

Anna went to Sunday-school with Minnie,

and was charmed with her little class. They all recited well, and listened with pleased attention when Minnie talked to them.

"How much they love you, Minnie," said Anna, when they came out. "When I return to Elderbank I'm going to *try* to follow your example."

In the evening they all sang hymns, and Minnie and Anna told the children Bible stories.

"I feel as if I had known you four *years*, instead of four *days*," said Gracie, as she kissed Anna good-night.

When Mr. Carleton bade her good-night, he called her "daughter;" and Anna went to sleep that night with a new resolve—that of making her home like the Carletons.

XI.

Brother Ralph.

GRACIE came bounding in upon the girls one afternoon; they were sewing in the sitting-room, and chatting gayly as usual.

"Here's a letter for you, Minnie," said she, stumbling over Laurie's little chair in her haste. "Rebecca stood in the door and gave it to me as I passed; and, oh! Minnie, she looks *so* sick, you'd hardly know her."

Minnie hastily opened it and read:—

"DEAR MINNIE:—I'm sick, but you can't come to me. *Why*, do you ask? Because you are a Christian. I've revealed my secret to my father. I could deceive him no longer. He was grieved and vexed, but not so angry as I feared he would be. He talked to me a

long, long time; and, Minnie, I love him so well I was *almost* persuaded to renounce my faith in the Messiah—but I *did not;* and my final answer was, 'Father, I can *die*, but I *can't* deny my Saviour!' He's forbidden me to call him 'father;' and since, when I use the word I love so well, he gives me no answer. I can lie down in peace now, and—*die.* I have no wish to live; my all is in heaven; and could I lie down this day beside my mother, I would be glad. However, 'God's will, not mine, be done.' We shall meet again, dear friend,—if not here, in a Home where sorrow never comes. Do not answer, but love and pray for your sincere friend,

"REBECCA."

Minnie threw the note to Anna.

"Poor Rebecca!" said Anna, as she refolded it. "How cruel her father is!"

"I suppose he thinks he's justified in it!" said Minnie.

"Well, Minnie, what are you going to do?"

"Nothing, but 'love and pray' for her!"

"Oh! Minnie," said Gracie, who was sitting on the floor with a book in her lap, "what's an oracle? you said you'd tell me."

"I must see about tea now; Anna will tell you," and Minnie put away her sewing and left the room.

Gracie jumped into Anna's lap. Anna smiled.

"An oracle, Gracie, among the people who lived a long time ago in Italy and Greece, was a god, or the answer of a god. If a person wished to know anything that was going to happen, he would persuade the priest or priestess to give him an answer from the god. The answer was usually of two meanings, so that it could be taken either way, and the god always had the name of telling the truth. At one place, Gracie, the priest hid in a tree, and the people thought that the tree answered them.

"They had different ways of deciding questions," said Nellie, "for don't you know, Romulus and Remus told by the flight of the

birds which should be the founder of the new city?"

"Rome was built on seven hills. Wellington and Napoleon fought on the field of Waterloo, and Wellington conquered; the battle was fought on Sunday, forty years and one day after the battle of Bunker Hill; and George Washington wouldn't tell a lie when he was a little boy," said Gracie, all in one breath; "that's all the history I know, and I'm so afraid I shall forget that!"

"I know a good deal about all that," said Nellie, "and I know that Wellington never wrote a letter in which 'duty' wasn't seen, or Bonaparte the word 'glory'!"

"Those two words tell the story of their lives," said Anna.

"I know about Luther singing when he was a little boy. Nellie told me, but I've forgotten whether 'twas 'Yankee Doodle,' or—or—what was it, Nellie?"

"I won't tell you, Gracie; you ought to be ashamed of yourself. How *could* Luther

sing that?" said Nellie, in great displeasure.

"Well!" said Gracie, jumping down from Anna's lap, "I don't pretend to be as wise as you are; but, Anna, may I ask you a question? and will you answer it like an oracle?"

"I'll try to answer it."

"Well! will it be rainy to-morrow?"

"The weather to-morrow will please you," said Anna, gravely; "or, perhaps you'll try to be pleased with it," she added, laughing.

"Thank you, you're *almost* as good as Minnie."

Gracie ran out of the room to escape a pincushion which Anna aimed at her head.

Anna wrote home such glowing accounts of her visit that in the next letter came permission to extend her visit to two weeks.

One evening, when the two weeks had nearly expired, and Anna felt really at home at Oak Grove, Mr. Carleton came in with a letter from Elderbank.

"From Ralph!" said she, taking it eagerly.

"Here, Minnie, as he always reads yours 'tis but fair that you should see this," and she tossed her the note.

"DEAR SISTER MINE!—We all miss you, and all want you home again. I will be with you to-morrow afternoon. Mother has changed her mind about going to Aunt Sue's, and has commissioned me to bring your precious self to Elderbank. Home is harldly home without you! With most deferential regards to your friend, Miss Minnie, and much love to yourself, I am, as ever,

"BROTHER RALPH.

"Elderbank, Aug. 24th, 18——."

"That was written this morning," said Anna, "and he'll be here to-morrow. Oh! Minnie, if there's any one I dearly love, it's this same brother Ralph."

The next evening Ralph came. Minnie received him with a slight tinge of embarrassment in her manner, but it soon wore off. Anna seemed perfectly happy; she sat by his

side all the evening, scarcely speaking, only enjoying his varied conversation. It was settled that he should stay two days, and on the third take his sister home. By the next noon he was a favorite with all: he talked politics and "the times" with Mr. Carleton, books and music with Minnie, and assisted Sophie in her parsing. He saw her puzzling over a lesson, and sitting down beside her said,—

"Let me aid you, Miss Sophie! what is it that puzzles you?"

Sophie read, "'The Atlantic Ocean is three thousand miles wide.' I can't govern *miles*. He explained to her that 'twas in the objective case, without any governing word.

From that moment she was his firm friend. Any one that understood grammar was a scholar in Sophie's eyes, and Lindley Murray was her greatest wonder. He admired Nellie's heroes, and fought over with her some of the battles in her school history; romped with Gracie, and played with and

told stories to Laurie. His frank, open face and happy smile won every one; his mind was well cultivated, and his manner truly courteous; and his conversation was teeming with thought, and clothed in simple, elegant English.

Minnie was charmed with her friend's brother, and Anna teased her till she got her opinion.

"Where are you going, Laurie?" asked Ralph. He stood on the balcony, with his hat in his hand.

"I'm going down to the foot of the garden to sit under the trees and hear the birds sing."

"May I go too?"

"Oh! will you?"

Ralph took the little boy's hand;—they walked along the path, opened the gate, went down the stone steps, and through the long grass to an old oak, and sat down on a rural seat beneath it.

"This *is* pleasant!" said Ralph. "Do you often come here, Laurie?"

"Oh! yes. I sit here and think."

"*Think!* about what?"

Laurie hesitated: he had an intuitive perception that his thoughts would not be understood or appreciated; with a child's instinct he knew that Ralph was not a Christian.

After a pause he spoke:—"I think how beautiful everything must be, though I can't see it; and that, one of these days, when Jesus comes for me, He'll open my eyes and I shall see—in heaven."

Ralph was awed.

"Why didn't you tell me at first?"

"I thought you didn't like such things—I felt it. I *think* more because I'm blind."

"Do you love to think of such things?"

"About Jesus and heaven? yes; don't you?"

"No," said Ralph, gravely, "I don't."

"Anna does!"

Ralph started. He had noticed a change; she seemed happier now.

Ralph passed his hand over Laurie's curls.

"What makes you love to think of these things?"

"Why," said the blind boy, eagerly, "suppose you had a dear, dear friend, a good way off, in a beautiful home, wouldn't you love to think of Him, and want to go and see Him?"

"Why, yes, if I were *sure* of His love!"

"*Sure!* He *died* for us, because He loved us so well!"

"Are you *sure?*"

"The Bible says so!"

"Are you *sure* that's true?"

"Oh! don't; I sha'n't love you if you talk so. I *am* sure!"

"I'm glad you are, dear little Laurie; I wouldn't make you doubt it if I could. I wish I could love it, too," he sighed; "there *is* something in religion,—I never saw it before.

"What makes you love Jesus, Laurie?"

"Because '*He* first loved me.' I wish you loved Him, too," he added, putting his hand in Ralph's.

"I wish so, too," was the answer. "Would you be afraid to die?" Ralph asked, clasping the little hand.

"Oh! no, only sorry for Minnie—she loves me so *very* much!"

"How do you always think of heaven, Laurie?"

"As *home*, the *real* 'sweet, sweet home!'"

"Are you very wicked?"

"Yes," said Laurie, sadly, "but I've given my heart to Jesus; it was so wicked I couldn't take care of it. He keeps it now for me."

"How did you give it to Him, Laurie?"

"I said, 'Saviour, take my heart—keep it, I love Thee so very much—and that's all I have to give.' Won't you give Him yours? won't you *try?*" and he put his arms around Ralph's neck, and repeated, "Won't you *try* to love Jesus?"

"Yes," Ralph whispered, and a tear fell from eyes unused to weep.

"Shall we go in, now?" asked Ralph, after two hours had passed.

"Yes, if you please, I'm *so* tired!"

Ralph carried him.

"Thank you! how good you are," said Laurie, when he stepped upon the balcony.

Minnie went up stairs with him to the nursery; he wished to lie down.

"How soon you get tired, lately, Laurie," said she, anxiously. He laid down, with a bright spot on either cheek. Minnie stayed with him until he fell asleep.

Ralph walked up and down the floor, and mused. Anna went up to him, and laid her hand on his arm. "Of what are you thinking so earnestly, brother Ralph?" she asked, playfully. He did not smile.

"I'm thinking that there *is* truth in religion," said he, with contracted brows. "I always thought it was mere fanaticism, cant, a cloak for rogues. I never saw a household

regulated by it before; but here 'tis the moving principle—the master spirit that controls the whole. Anna, are you a Christian?"

His sister turned her full eyes upon him; words came to her lips, but her voice refused utterance, and a flood of tears relieved her. He drew her arm within his, and they continued walking.

When Minnie came down they were in earnest conversation. "What are we living for?" he was saying impatiently, when Minnie entered.

"With a motive, surely!" she said, smiling.

"What are *you* living for, Miss Carleton?" he asked, with a searching glance.

The color came and went on Minnie's cheek, but she answered, with a light in her eye that he could not understand, "For *home*, and," pointing upward, "for *heaven*."

After dinner Anna complained of headache, and went to her room. Ralph found Minnie in the library; and when the children came in from school they were still talking

of what had a new, strange interest for him—religion.

Gracie coaxed Ralph to come and swing her, and Minnie went to Anna. She was just ready to come down; and, twining their arms around each other, they walked up and down the hall in school-girl fashion.

"Your work at home will be easier than you think for, Anna."

"Yes," and Anna smiled, "through *your* influence, Minnie."

The summer evening passed pleasantly. Mr. Carleton read the newspaper; Ralph and Minnie held an argument on Woman's Mission and her Influence, and Anna listened.

XII.

Laurie's Death.

ANNA stood in the door with her travelling dress on. "I'm sorry you're going, Anna," said Gracie. "Won't you come again? and you, too, Mr. Merton?" said she, turning to Ralph; "I like to have you play with me."

It was a beautiful summer morning, and early, for the birds were just singing their morning songs, and the dew was yet sparkling on the grass and flowers. Anna bade them "good-morning," she would not say "good-bye." Ralph lingered, and as he bade Minnie "good-bye," he whispered, in so low a tone that 'twas heard only by Minnie's ears, "*Pray for me.*"

They were gone, and for a day or two Minnie was quite lonely. Anxiety for Laurie

began to creep into her mind, and she redoubled her care of him, not permitting him out of her presence for a moment.

He took walks with Minnie as usual; but they grew shorter every day, and after a few weeks he went but to the garden. There he would sit in Minnie's lap and talk by the hour—never alluding to himself, for that he knew would give her pain. And Minnie prized these little talks, for she knew they were numbered, and would soon cease altogether. Soon he could not leave the house, but lay on the sofa all day, Minnie sitting beside him. The children begged to stay from school, but Minnie would not consent; the noise troubled Laurie, and there was no immediate danger. "Of what?" she dared not ask herself. The doctor came every day; he could do no good, he said, but they all felt better when he came.

Day after day Minnie sat beside him. The blinds were closed, and only the softened summer light came through them; it was a

comfort, too, to have them closed, for Laurie looked better. His little chair was as usual in its place. Minnie would not allow it to be removed, although she knew the dear little form would never fill it again. His father seldom went to the city, but would sit for hours looking at the dying blind boy, now in his illness so like his mother. Laurie never murmured, never spoke of suffering, though sometimes his brow would contract with pain, and he would clasp his thin hands. This quiet suffering was harder for Minnie to bear, and often she would go away and weep alone, but to the family she was serene and even cheerful.

The children could not realize him to be dying. They now stayed from school. No one in the house spoke above a whisper; even Gracie was hushed. At twilight, if Minnie could leave Laurie, she would stay awhile with them; and Minnie, though needing comfort herself, would try to comfort them.

Laurie was now confined to his crib in the

nursery. He had asked to be taken there. He often asked Minnie to read to him, and always chose hymns. Her quiet tone seemed to soothe him. She would sit holding his hand in hers, and sing to him for hours. She repressed the tremor in her voice as she sang favorite after favorite; and once, only once, he asked for "Cross and Crown."

"I thought it would do you good, Minnie," he whispered.

Minnie could not answer, but as she kissed him, her heart *almost* refused to give him up.

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon; Minnie and Laurie were alone. Their father had lain down, and their sisters were at Sunday-school. Katy was stationed outside the door. Nothing could induce her to leave her post; she would stay—she might be needed, she said.

Minnie thought Laurie was asleep, he lay so still.

"Minnie!"

She bent over him. "What is it, darling?"

"Sit down side of me, I want to talk a little while."

'Won't it tire you?"

"Oh, no! I must talk a little, for perhaps I can't, by and by. I want to tell you, Minnie, that you mustn't feel sad when—when—I'm with Jesus. I shall be happier, Minnie, and you mustn't want me back. It won't be very long before you come, all of you, and then we'll be so happy—happier than we've ever been here; and I can *see* you all," said he, his face brightening; "and *that* makes me so happy. You won't forget me, sister?"

"*Forget you!*" and she pressed his little hand almost convulsively.

"I know you will not, Minnie; but think of me always as with Jesus. I want to thank you because you've loved me so much. You must love me more now, for I shall be worthier; love little angel Laurie more than little blind Laurie."

Minnie was sobbing.

"Minnie," said he, sadly, "dear Minnie,

don't you love Jesus well enough to give me to Him?"

Minnie wept more quietly, and finally ceased; they were the last tears she ever shed for Laurie. Afterwards tears would have been a relief, but their fount was dried.

"I'm sleepy, Minnie; kiss me, and sing!"

Minnie sang until he slept; then she knelt beside him and prayed.

He awoke about dusk, and asked for his sisters. As he kissed Sophie, he whispered, "Comfort Minnie and papa." To Nellie, "Love Jesus, Nellie." And to Gracie, "Will *you* come to heaven too, Gracie?" Gracie sobbed so violently that Minnie sent her away, and the others followed quietly.

Laurie asked for Ralph Merton.

"Do you wish to see him very much, Laurie?"

"Yes, very much, very much," he replied.

The next day he was sent for. He came just at night. Laurie wished to be with him alone. Ralph came from the room much

affected, and went away without speaking to any one.

A day or two after, Laurie said,

"Minnie, bring the scissors and cut off one of my curls."

Minnie did so.

"Is it a pretty one?"

"Yes, very, Laurie."

"Let me kiss it! now keep it for my sake, Minnie.

"The leaves are falling, Minnie, and the birds going; and I'm going, too."

These were his last words. *Laurie* was gone.

How still the house was! The childish voices were hushed, and the childish footsteps no longer echoed through the rooms. Every foot-fall, every time a door was closed, every whisper, seemed to jar the little sleeper.

He still lay in the crib. His sightless eyes were closed, and their long lashes swept the waxen cheek. The little mouth was *almost* smiling, the fair curls fell in golden ripples

over his shoulders, and the thin hands clasped a tiny rose-bud. Gracie put it there. Each sister brought a flower, the very last of the season,—the last tribute to little Laurie's memory; no, not the last, for a marble monument was placed where Laurie slept beside his mother, and Minnie chose the inscription:

"Blind Laurie,
"NOT LOST, BUT GONE BEFORE."

The little chair was vacant, the little crib unslept in! Minnie laid away his few playthings, and folded away the pretty boyish clothes! His name was never spoken. Minnie thought she could bear it better if some one would say "*Laurie*," but she shrank from it herself, and no one else *could!*

Gracie cried herself sick; Nellie went round the house, pale and thin, hardly speaking; and Sophie tried to do as nearly as possible as Minnie did. "Comfort papa and Minnie, Sophie."

Mr. Carleton bore it better than Minnie

expected. It seemed to draw him nearer heaven, and Minnie had feared the reverse. *She* had so much to think of she could not give way to her grief; but it preyed upon her, and many said she would soon follow her blind brother.

One day Minnie found Gracie in tears. She was standing in the nursery by Laurie's crib. She started when Miriam drew near, and hastily crumpled a paper in her hand. Her face flushed, and she would have run away, but Minnie held her fast, and kissing away her tears, whispered, "I am your sister, Gracie,—what is it?" Gracie sobbed; Minnie could not soothe her. At last she raised her head, and putting the crumpled paper in her sister's hand, ran from the room. Minnie opened it. In Gracie's imperfect writing she read,—

"Laurie's Farewell.

'The stars are peeping now, Minnie,
From out their azure dome;
They speak in whispers low, Minnie,
They are calling Laurie home.

"And thou wilt let me go, Minnie,
I'll shine more brightly far;
I'll whisper love to thee, Minnie,
From evening's silver star:

"And thou wilt love it, too, Minnie;
It's sweetly cheering ray
Will steal into thy heart, Minnie,
And chase the pain away.

'For it will speak of me, Minnie,
What I was once to thee;
Will tell you what I was, Minnie,
But never more canst be.

"'T will tell thee what I am, Minnie,
And what I aye shall be,
And what thou wilt be, dear Minnie,
When I have come for thee.

"So wipe away thy tears, Minnie,
And kiss me once again,
And lay thy heart to mine, Minnie,
To ease its throbbing pain.

'And when thou missest me, Minnie,
Miss Laurie in thy home,
Then think of what I say, Minnie,
From out yon starry dome.

"The brightest star you see, Minnie,
The fairest of the night,—
From that I'll speak to thee, Minnie,
Of my high home so bright.

"I'll tell thee what I see, Minnie,
When thou art all alone;
I'll tell of those we love, Minnie,
Around the rainbow throne.

"I'll speak of *one* we love, Minnie,
Of one who lived on earth;
That one who loved us, too, Minnie,
Of her who gave us birth.

"My eyes will not be dim, Minnie,
All sorrow there shall flee,
For God will wipe my eyes, Minnie
And Laurie there will *see*.

"And I'll watch o'er thee, Minnie,
Thy guardian angel be,
And guide thee, too, at last, Minnie,
Where grief and sorrow flee.

Press thy dear lips to mine, Minnie,
My love I ne'er can tell;
But it will speak in this, Minnie—
Blind Laurie's last farewell."

Gracie avoided Minnie's glance for a long time, but her fervent kiss and whisper, after she had read it, told her deep love for her wild, beautiful, gifted Gracie. Minnie read it to them all at twilight, that hour they

loved so much! Each kissed Gracie silently, and she felt that there was more of tenderness for days in their manner towards her.

They missed the little only brother in their twilight talks. Their father sometimes joined them, but they felt his presence a restraint; and he seemed to feel it too, and that hour he spent alone. The piano was not opened; no one could bear it. Gracie said, "I know now how father felt. How thoughtless I was!"

The children stayed at home and recited to Minnie. Their father proposed it, and Miriam gratefully accepted the charge. She *was* lonely.

Thus the autumn passed away, and deepened into winter.

XIII.

Anna at Home.

ANNA'S home was as attractive as wealth and refined taste could make it; both nature and art combined to render it delightful. The house was built of stone. It was of but two stories; and ivy crept over it, and fine old trees shaded it. A grassy lawn in front of the house extended even to the water's edge. It had been in the possession of the Mertons many years. Merton Manor, as 'twas called, was pointed out to every traveller as the oldest and finest place in the county.

The first week after Anna's return she was busy thinking of her new resolve, and she thought so much of it that she *forgot* to execute her purpose. Anna's greatest fault was self-confidence; and often, like Peter, she would "weep bitterly" after an exhibition

of it. But she was distrusting herself more daily, learning that her own strength was "perfect weakness." She *was* "growing in grace," and she rejoiced.

Her father seemed care-worn and anxious, and her mother had lost much of her gayety, and passed most of her time in her own room. Her father came home later every night, and often Anna could hear his footsteps in his room before daylight, and she knew he had not slept. Ralph told her the cause of the change. Their father had engaged deeply in speculations, and now his all was at stake. It was kept from Anna by her fond parents. They did not wish to cloud her youth with their vexations; they would come soon enough of themselves.

One morning Anna went to her mother's room; she had just had a long conversation with her husband, and was looking pale and dispirited.

"Are you ill, mother?"

"No, my daughter; but my head aches."

"More probably your *heart*, my mother," thought Anna.

"Shall I bathe it, mother?"

"Yes!

"Your gentle touch makes it much better, my love," said her mother, when Anna had bathed it.

Anna arranged a pillow so that her mother's head might lie easily upon it; she put a stool to her feet, and with noiseless step put everything in the room in perfect order, closed the blinds, and then sat down by her mother.

"Shall I read to you, mother?"

"Yes!"

Anna took a small hymn-book from among a pile of books on a stand. She turned over its leaves, evidently searching for some particular hymn. After finding one, she read it slowly and with clear enunciation. Anna was a fine reader, and the intonation of her voice gave additional beauty to the hymn.

"'Though troubles assail,
And dangers affright;
Though friends should all fail,
And foes all unite;
Yet one thing secures us,
Whatever betide;
The Scripture assures us
The Lord will provide.

"'The birds, without barn
Or storehouse, are fed;
From them let us learn
To trust for our bread.
His saints what is fitting
Shall ne'er be denied,
As long as 'tis written,
The Lord will provide.

"'We may, like the ships,
By tempests be tossed
On perilous deeps,
But cannot be lost.
Though Satan enrages
The mind and the tide,
The promise engages
The Lord will provide.

"'His call we obey,
Like Abram of old,
Not knowing our way,
But faith makes us bold;

For though we are strangers,
We have a good guide,
And trust in all dangers
The Lord will provide.

"'When Satan appears
To stop up our path,
And fills us with fears,
We triumph by faith.
He cannot take from us,
Though oft he has tried,
This heart-cheering promise,
The Lord will provide.

"'He tells us we're weak,
Our hope is in vain;
The good that we seek
We ne'er shall obtain.
But when such suggestions
Our spirits have plied,
This answers all questions,
The Lord will provide.

"'No strength of our own,
Or goodness we claim,—
Yet since we have known
The Saviour's great name,
In this, our strong tower,
For safety we hide;
The Lord is our power,
The Lord will provide.

"'When life sinks apace,
And death is in view,
The word of His grace
Shall comfort us through.
No fearing or doubting,—
With Christ on our side,
We hope to die shouting,
The Lord will provide.'"

"Once more, Anna!"

Once more Anna read it. When she closed the book, she whispered, "'The Lord *will* provide,' mother." Mrs. Merton raised herself up—"How did you know, Anna?"

"Ralph told me."

"He did wrong, very wrong," and Mrs. Merton looked displeased.

"Are not troubles lighter when shared by those we love, dear mother," said Anna, earnestly.

Mrs. Merton kissed her quietly, and said she would like to be alone.

When Mr. Merton came in to dinner his manner was changed. "Prospects are brightening," said he, rubbing his hands together.

"I could not wish for better," and he kissed his wife and Anna, and shook hands with Ralph.

"'The Lord will provide,'" whispered Mrs. Merton to her daughter, as they left the dining-room.

Anna looked up with a happy glance. Her mother was beginning to suspect that Anna was changed.

The question was agitated as to Ralph's profession, for profession he wished it to be. He said he had not yet decided, and his father gave him till November to think of it. At the expiration of that time he would talk over the matter with him, having due regard for his preference, "though his own," he said, "was for the bar."

Ralph was growing more thoughtful, and Anna was glad. Her secret hope was that he might choose the ministry, for which his brilliant talents so peculiarly fitted him. She thought his originality and freshness of thought, and his varied learning and com-

mand of language, would adorn the clerical profession; his decision of character, when turned to the right, would be needed for the conflict; and his winning manner would prepossess others in favor of Christianity. However, she said nothing, leaving him to his own inclination; but she prayed much.

Sundays Anna begged for an early dinner, that she might attend afternoon service; and her brother always accompanied her. One afternoon the text was, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Ralph listened attentively.

The preacher urged the duty upon young men with impressive earnestness. "Freely as ye have received, freely give," were his closing words.

The next day Ralph was sent for to Oak Grove; Laurie was dying. When he returned, he held a long conversation with his father. He had decided, and for the *ministry*.

Ralph's choice was a great blow to his father, and for weeks he hardly appeared

himself. Mrs. Merton was glad, though secretly; and Anna—*she* wept for joy. Ralph went to a distant city to pursue his studies, and Anna was left alone with her parents.

"Mother," said she, one day, "have you any objection to my joining the Bible-class in Sunday-school?"

"Not if you wish it, my dear; certainly not."

Anna longed to tell her mother *why* she wished to join it, but something restrained her.

Anna found that the Bible-class had no vacancy; but the kind superintendent offered her a class, which she thankfully accepted, though with a feeling of unworthiness. Every Sunday found her there, more and more wrapt up in this new and delightful duty. At first she felt some embarrassment in talking to them, but it soon disappeared, and she would tell them of the Saviour who loved the little ones, and their bright

faces showed with what deep interest they listened. Three months after she took the class one of her little flock was called away; "the Father had need of her." Anna was sent for just before she died, and the little one said, "You told me about Jesus, Miss Anna. Oh! I can't thank you enough. Tell all the little girls that Lily Mason loved Jesus, and has gone to live with Him, and that they must come, too." And Lily Mason died. Only ten summers had she lived on earth, and then she went to Jesus.

One evening in the winter—it was a Sunday evening—Anna was reading aloud to her mother, and her father was dozing in his large chair. Suddenly he aroused himself, and said, "My daughter, give me some music."

She went to the piano with a secret warning that she would be tried, and severely, too. She sang a few hymns, when her father stopped her, and said, testily,—

"Not that, not that, child! are you losing your common sense?"

After a silent prayer for strength, Anna said,—

"Please excuse me, father—I can't play anything but sacred music to-night, indeed I can't!"

"Obey me, or go to your room!" said he, sternly. Anna burst into tears, and left the room.

"How can you, Henry?" said her mother; "she is always so obedient."

"She defied my authority," said Mr. Merton, "and no one beneath my roof does that." His tone forbade further argument, and Mrs. Merton said no more. Mr. Merton walked the floor an hour, with his arms folded and his brows knit.

Before Mrs. Merton retired, she went to her daughter's room. Anna had wept herself to sleep, and now her face was calm, though ever and anon she sighed deeply. "What a sweet, childlike face she has," her mother thought, and bending over she kissed her once or twice. "She possesses something

which I do not understand!" said her mother, to herself, as she went to her own room, and she felt more of a mother's love in her heart than she had ever felt before.

Anna gave her father his morning kiss as usual, when she entered the breakfast-room, and he folded her to his heart in a warmer embrace than usual, and Anna knew that she was forgiven. That evening she played all his favorite pieces.

The next Sunday evening he asked her to play. Her hands trembled as she touched the keys. She played several sacred pieces, and then left the piano. Her father kissed her, and said he had not had such a treat for a long time. Anna's prayer that night was *all* praise.

Mr. Murray, Anna's pastor, had seen her in Sunday-school, and one afternoon he called on her. He talked with her a long time, and proposed her coming out before the world as a Christian. Her mother's consent was easily gained, but with her father 'twas more

difficult. At last he yielded to the solicitations of his wife and daughter, saying,—

"Loving your Father in heaven will not make you love your earthly father less, will it, my daughter?"

"I love you *more* now, father!"

Anna saw a tear in his eye, and went to her room and wept for happiness.

Gradually Anna's influence was felt: the family attended church all day on Sunday, and no company was invited on that day. She always sang for her father in the evening, and he began to love home better. Her mother, too, was changing slowly, and Anna remembered her in prayer. Ralph's letters cheered her. How changed he was, so beautifully changed!

XIV.

Clouds and Sunshine.

MINNIE'S health did not improve as the spring advanced; her father, thinking her duties as a teacher too irksome, sent her sisters to school again, although Minnie begged hard against it. Thus left alone, she wandered through the house almost aimless. Books and music had lost their interest, and her daily sewing was regarded as a hard task. She felt weak and dispirited. She could not sleep at night, but caught only a little troubled slumber about daybreak, and awoke late and listless. She talked very little, only answering questions; it seemed as if home had lost its charm, and though she tried to make it seem happier, she did not feel equal to it.

She read her Bible and prayed, but all seemed dark. The sacred volume seemed to have a hidden meaning which it never had before; and when she prayed, she thought, "How do I know I'm heard? Perhaps there is no God." No God! poor Minnie!

Her mind was harrassed with doubts and fears. She took no pleasure in living, and she feared to die. "Was I *ever* a Christian?" she asked herself, in agony, "or have I been deceived?" She tried to seek relief in prayer, but she could *not* pray. Her appetite was gone. She grew pale and thin, and her head ached constantly. She wept a good deal; she felt too weak to do anything else. Her father noticed the change, though it had been so gradual, and felt with pain her reserve towards himself. He asked several times if she was well, but she burst into tears and could not answer him. He thought it grief for Laurie, and, though he regretted it, could see no remedy. Her sisters felt the change, and did not come to her as usual

with their lessons. At twilight Minnie stayed in her room alone. the children gathered around the fire, which was hardly needed now, and talked of their father, their mother, and Minnie, and *once* Gracie spoke of Laurie. Minnie always came to the tea-table for her father's sake, but conversation flagged, and it was not the happy home it once was.

One evening, Mr. Carleton, noticing that Minnie ate nothing, asked, "Are you not well, my daughter?"

"My head aches."

"It's your brain, Miriam; you think too much."

"I guess it's *information* on the brain!" said Gracie.

The summer days were passing, and Minnie was no better. Her father, now thoroughly alarmed, stopped one afternoon at good old Dr. Hurlburt's; he had attended both Mrs. Carleton and Laurie, and the family were all much attached to him. Mr. Carleton asked him to make, seemingly, only

a friendly call, engage Minnie in conversation, and try to find out her ailment, whether of body or mind.

The good doctor spent two hours with Minnie the next day, and talked of himself and children; and getting her interested in her own home, for the first time since the death of Laurie. He entirely won her confidence. Her reserve was melted, and she told him of the dark months since Laurie's death. At the end of the two hours' conference he fully understood her case.

"Mental depression! mental depression!" he said to her father. "Medicine won't cure her. Physically she is very weak, and it affects her mentally; she is under a cloud. Change of air and scene she needs. Can't you send her away for a month?"

"Anything to make her herself again," was her father's reply.

The very next day came a letter from Anna, begging a visit from Minnie. They all wished it, she said—father, mother, and

Ralph. He was at home for a while, and had proposed to come for her. Minnie smiled to herself, as though it would be impossible. "What would father do without me?" and then she added, with a smile—a sad one—"*Can't* he do without Miriam?" After deliberating all day, she showed the letter to her father. "Just the thing!" said he, kissing her for pleasure; "just the thing! When will you go? to-morrow?"

Miriam laughed; but at the end of an hour he had persuaded her that it was her duty to accept the invitation so kindly given.

"But what will you do, father?"

"Can't I live without you, Miriam? Perhaps you are not as necessary to my existence as you may happen to suppose. But, seriously, my daughter, we shall get along nicely. My step-sister, Pauline Primrose, whom you have never seen, has long wished to make us a visit, and I'll write to her immediately. For *my* sake, dear Miriam, try to be well."

Minnie wrote to Anna that night, in better spirits than she'd been for a long time. Miss Primrose came the day before Minnie left for Elderbank. Minnie was not much prepossessed in her favor, but hoped that she might prove better than she looked. Gracie whispered, in confidence, that she "hated the old maid already." Minnie found Mr. and Mrs. Merton kind, very kind. She loved Mrs. Merton right away. Mr. Merton she admired, but was a little afraid of. Anna laughed and cried when she wel comed her, and said, "Now, Minnie, you're here, and you sha'n't go till we let you." Minnie smiled her thanks; she was too weary to talk. Anna took her to her own pleasant room, took off her travelling dress, darkened the windows, and made her lie down while she bathed her head, put her hand over her lips to stop the thanks, and left her, with the playful injunction to "go to sleep and be good."

Minnie was much fatigued, and soon fell

into a refreshing sleep, and was still sleeping when the tea-bell rang. Anna would not awaken her, but took her tea to her as soon as she awoke. The evening passed in music and conversation. Ralph and Anna exchanged glances at Minnie's animated face and vivacious talk.

They took walks as long as Minnie could bear, and soon extended them for her sake. Horseback-riding was recommended by Mrs. Merton, and all three often spent the early morning in this way.

One morning Anna said she was busy, and she sent her brother and Minnie away without her. They remarked upon the beauty of the morning, and then rode on in silence.

After a while, Ralph said, "Do you remember, Miss Minnie, that your little brother and I had quite a long conversation just before he died?"

"Yes."

"He wanted to talk to me about myself,

to coax me to become a Christian, and to think about being a minister and a missionary to 'the poor mothers who throw their little babies away,' he said; and, Minnie, *I promised him I would!*

"Have you nothing to say to me, Minnie?" he asked, after a pause.

"God speed you, my friend!" said she, giving him her hand; and, clasping her pony's neck, her head fell upon it, and her tears fell like rain.

"Anna, indeed no one knows of my decision; I wished to tell you first of any one."

They rode on some time in silence, each occupied in thought. They turned their horses homeward. After a long silence, Ralph said, slowly,

"Minnie, must I go *alone* to the heathen? Do you love Jesus well enough to work for Him in a foreign land? and *me* well enough to work *with* me?"

Minnie placed her hand in his without speaking. He was answered. When they

reached the gate he assisted her to alight, and she went to her room, and—cried, with a mixture of feelings hard to be defined.

Letters came often from home, and Minnie felt that she was wanted there. She had been at Elderbank a month, and was fully restored to health and happiness. One morning she was sitting with Anna; they were both sewing. Ralph sat near them, reading.

"It's time for the mail," said Anna; "will you go to the office? Minnie's expecting a letter, Ralph."

He came in in a few minutes, and threw into Minnie's lap a letter. It was from Gracie:—

"MY OWN DEAREST SISTER:—Every day I wish for you, and wish till I'm tired of wishing. Aunt Paul Prim is as ugly as can be. I hate her, I do! Is it wicked? I wish it wasn't, for she's *so* provoking! I cry myself to sleep every night, because I want to

see you so much. I was crying in school the other day, when Miss Grey called the Geography class, and so I couldn't finish my 'cry' then, but will, crying for joy, when you come back. If you are well, come, won't you? Please do! Am I childish? Well, I hope I always shall be, if loving dear sister Minnie makes me so! Really, Minnie, we can't be happy without you. I've no one to tell me when I'm wicked, and I *never* do right. Nellie puzzles over her dry old histories, (father's bought her a new set!) and she wanted to tell me about Peter the Great, of —— England, I believe, and I ran away, with my fingers in my ears. I never shall know any thing, shall I? Sophie can't parse. She wanted me yesterday to help her to hunt out the six nominatives, and I ran off, and climbed the old apple-tree, and tore my dress, and Aunt Prim scolded! Oh, dear! everything goes wrong! The biscuits get burned, and Katy *calls* Aunt Prim names, and says "Miss

Minnie," I believe, fifty times a day. Every body sends love; even pussy purrs when I tell her I'm writing to sister Minnie. Kiss Anna, and—I was going to say, Mr. Ralph,—I guess I won't, though he kissed me once. There! I've told, and I said I wouldn't! but you'll forget it, won't you? Good-bye, with love from GRACIE."

"Can I resist such an appeal?" said Minnie, giving Anna the letter.

"Fly-away! just like her! What dear sisters you have, Minnie!"

The next morning Minnie left Elderbank, with mutual regret. Mr. Carleton thought he could not be thankful enough when he saw his daughter so completely herself again. Gracie danced around the house all day; she said she couldn't keep still. Sophie and Nellie were as pleased, but they showed it more quietly. Ralph stayed all night, and spent all the evening alone with Mr. Carleton in the library. Minnie was

there a very few minutes, and she came out with tears both of joy and sorrow in her eyes. And so Minnie was given to the mission-work; and, in a very few years, as soon as Ralph graduated, and Sophy could supply her place, the sister-mother would leave home and loved ones, save *one*, to tell the heathen of the Saviour.

That night Minnie touched a secret spring in her writing-desk, and took out a slip of paper. On it was written—"LAURIE: Oak Grove, March 19th, 18—."

How well Miriam remembered that morning! She tore the paper in pieces. "Ah! Laurie, had you lived, *this* never would have been!" She knelt at the window, and, with her chin on the sill as of old, watched the stars, and mused.

XV.

Funny Doings!

THEY all had a great deal to tell Minnie of what had happened in her absence, school stories, village events, and, most interesting of all, about home and Sunday-school. Gracie had much to tell of Aunt Paul Prim, as she would persist in calling her; how old-maidish and fault-finding she was, and everything else in the catalogue of disagreeables she could think of. "I quarrel with her every day," said Gracie. "Why, Minnie, the very day you left home, she said she was surprised to find the house in such good order; that pale-faced sister of ours didn't have energy enough to do anything; and *didn't* I talk to her? But Sophie was as cool as a cucumber, and said you were sick. I've quarrelled with her every day since, and now she hates me as much as

I hate her!" Gracie spoke the truth; her aunt *did* dislike her, indeed all of them, Nellie excepted. How *she* crept into her good graces no one ever knew, though Gracie conjectured 'twas because Nellie went to the village one rainy day for a penny's worth of snuff for her—Gracie *would* say, "for the *cake*."

When Minnie came down to breakfast the first morning after her return, her father said, "Now, Miriam, we're glad to see you reinstated in your former honors," and playfully conducted her to the head of the table. Miss Primrose looked displeased, though she said nothing. From that morning Minnie was the object of her dislike; not openly, for she afterwards said that "Minnie had the Carleton look in her eyes if she did seem gentle, and that showed she wouldn't be trifled with!" However, she annoyed her in every possible way, contradicting her whenever she could, and, in the softest, blandest manner possible, always calling her "dear

niece," and other affectionate epithets. Minnie could see through her disguise, and tried to avoid her. Mr. Carleton thought everything was going on smoothly, for his daughters would not worry him with tales of their aunt; this she knew, and took advantage of. When Miss Primrose proposed to stay a while longer to "lighten the duties of dear Minnie," Mr. Carleton gladly assented for Minnie's sake.

Of all things Miss Primrose detested, music, she affected, was worst of all; and one evening positively forbade opening the piano. That evening Minnie played as usual, and the next morning gave Gracie her regular lesson.

"Do you remember what I said last night?" asked Miss Primrose, rather sharply.

"I understand you, Aunt Pauline," said Minnie, coolly, "but think it not proper for the *guest* to dictate to the *mistress*." Minnie's eyes flashed, and Miss Primrose cowered beneath her glance. She made no answer,

but for days spoke to her only in her father's presence; then she was the fondest of aunts.

Her ideas of family arrangements being different from Minnie's, everything was changed in the house. Gradually home did not wear the old aspect: the piano was closed, the chairs were stiffly arranged in rows along the walls, and everything had an uncomfortable look. Miss Primrose couldn't bear flowers, and many of Minnie's prettily arranged bouquets were thrown out before they began to wither. Miss Primrose liked "yarbs, penny-rial, catnip, and sich like," but couldn't see any *use* in flowers. The least noise disturbed Miss Primrose; she used to boast of her "delicate narves." One morning at breakfast she complained as usual of being sleepless. Unknown to herself she was a terrible snorer.

"I think, Aunt Paul Prim, you must have kept yourself awake with snoring," said Gracie, gravely.

They all laughed but Minnie, and she had hard work to restrain her risibles.

One morning Gracie went into the nursery, and there stood Aunt Prim before the bureau, with all Laurie's clothes laid out on his crib, and his playthings gathered into a little box.

Gracie turned pale.

"I thought they did no good, and I might as well send them to my little cousin," and she turned to leave the room taking them with her.

Gracie sprang forward and caught her by the arm.

"Touch those things, Aunt Paul Prim, and I'll *kill* you!"

Miss Primrose started. "What a little maniac you are," and she put her hand on the door-knob. Gracie ran out, closed and locked the door in a twinkling. Aunt Prim was too proud to make a disturbance, and what to do she didn't know; the nursery was on the third floor, and of course there was no egress from the windows, and the door leading from this room to Minnie's was locked.

Gracie took the key to Minnie, and laying her head in her lap, burst into tears. As soon as she could speak she told Minnie all that she had done. It was a long time before Minnie could be calm. She sent Gracie to school, charging her not to tell her sisters of what had happened. Minnie went to the nursery and faced her aunt; for the moment she almost hated her. Minnie pointed to the clothes, "Return them to the drawers," said she, calmly, but in a manner that showed she would be obeyed.

"What a family of wild-cats!" said Miss Primrose to herself, as she folded them away again.

"The keys, if you please." Miss Primrose handed them to her mechanically. They were in Minnie's writing-desk! Where did Aunt Prim find them? Minnie took the keys, thanked her ironically, and left her to chew the bitter cud of her reflections.

Minnie's resolve was taken. That evening Minnie told her father everything. Mr.

Carleton had a long conference with his sister the next morning, and at noon she left, after receiving a generous present from her step-brother. "Hurrah! three cheers!" shouted Gracie, as the carriage which contained her aunt rolled away.

"Oh! Minnie, let us have a half-holiday. Come, its the *fourth* of September, and we'll call it *our* 'Declaration of Independence.' Hurrah! freedom and Minnie for ever! *death* to tyrants, and Aunt Prim," and she capered around the room, upsetting two or three chairs, and stumbling over a stool and bruising her arm, which she didn't mind in the least, saying she was "suffering in a good cause."

In two days everything was arranged as usual, and "Home, sweet home" kept bubbling from Minnie's lips for a week.

The question was agitated for the third time whether or not Sophie should take a three years' course at B—— Seminary. This time the decision was in favor of it.

and for a while every one was preparing for Sophie's first leaving home. At last everything was ready, and Sophie had gone, not to return till the last of June! Minnie missed her very much, because they were almost inseparable. Sophie's childhood had not promised such interesting girlhood, and now at fifteen she was intelligent, amiable, and well-informed. She would not make a brilliant woman like Gracie; but a solid, sensible, Christian *woman*, in the true sense of the word. Gracie and Nellie were almost fourteen. Nellie felt herself almost a young lady, but Gracie was as much a child as ever; as frank, impulsive, and full of glee as at ten. Minnie was glad; she hoped she never would grow old—in heart. One afternoon Nellie brought Minnie a letter; the hand-writing was unknown, and the postmark New York. Wonderingly she read,—

"NEW YORK, Sept. 29th, 18—.

"MISS MIRIAM CARLETON:

"RESPECTED YOUNG LADY:—You may be filled with amazement at receiving an epistle from one comparatively a stranger. Our planet has revolved around its brilliant centre, the sun, almost twice since I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance, and then spent only the closing hours of the day beneath your father's hospitable roof. I felt pleasure in beholding you, and a feeling somewhat akin to affection played around my heart-strings. I am fully persuaded that you will make a good help-meet for a minister; that you would cordially engage in his irksome and arduous duties; you would, besides, entertain his company without embarrassment, and with good sense. I don't like erudition in a female; it only adorns the *lords* of creation, and I think you have just enough to know your position and fill it with honor. I think you would be an ornament to my profession, and fill a conspicuous place in

my household. For these reasons I honor you with the offer of my hand—not heart, for that's in a better cause.

"An answer is solicited, and it is to be hoped that you will acquiesce in the above conditions, and join yourself to me in the bonds of holy matrimony.

"With profoundest respect, yours, &c.,

"WILLIAM HARRISON PEMBROKE.

"Address—

"Rev. W. H. Pembroke,

"No. —, —— St.,

"New York."

Minnie laughed heartily as she refolded it. 'This is too good," said she, "so characteristic! really, quite a curiosity!".

She gave it to her father in the evening. He read it, half smiled, put it into his pocket without speaking, and next day mailed it for New York. It was never spoken of, though Minnie laughed to herself when she thought of it.

Minnie sometimes heard of Rebecca through Dr. Hurlburt. "She was failing," he said, "rapidly; why didn't Minnie visit her?" She told him the reason. "'Shaw!" said he, "I'll make it right!" The next morning he called. "Come, Miss Minnie," said he, "get ready; I spoke to Old Isaac about it, and he's perfectly willing." Minnie cheerfully accompanied him. Old Isaac bowed as she entered, and she hastened to her friend's room. How Rebecca was changed! She welcomed Miriam with a sweet smile. "I've longed for you so much, Minnie. God *is* good."

"Are you happy, Rebecca?"

"Very, very happy, father is so kind; and see, the doctor brought me this," and she laid her hand on a small Testament, "and father consented to it. Dr. Hurlburt can make him do anything."

Minnie thought she knew why.

Minnie sat down beside her, and told her of herself and of Ralph.

"I m very glad, Minnie," was all she said.

"I'm passing away, Minnie, slowly, but surely; and grief for my father's loneliness is all that mars my peace. I long to go. I would not stay if I might. I'm perfectly reconciled to the will of God; through the dark valley He will be with me, and guide me all the way through. Will you read to me, Minnie? it wearies me to read myself, and I dare not ask father though he is so kind."

Minnie read, "'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.'"

She read the chapter through slowly.

"How comforting!" said Rebecca. "'Peace I leave with you, *my* peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

The doctor now came in forbidding further conversation, and after talking with Rebecca a few moments, and giving a few directions, went away taking Minnie with

him. "Stay with her a few minutes every day, Miss Minnie," said he, on parting at her door, "and remember, *only* a few minutes."

Minnie gladly availed herself of this permission, but never exceeded the allotted time.

XVI.

Sophie at School.

IT was dark when Sophie arrived at the seminary. It was grim-looking enough in the evening shadows, and Sophie's heart sank within her as she thought, "Is this the place I've exchanged for home?" She felt very lonely, and her heart ached as she stood on the high steps, without *one* familiar face to cheer her. Minnie had written to Mrs. Bartlett, and she received Sophie with the greatest kindness. "I shall love you for your sister's sake, and I hope soon for your own," was said in a winning manner.

Sophie was shown to her room, on the third floor. It was small, but very neatly furnished. There was a dark carpet on the floor, and dark curtains at the two windows,

a bureau, washstand, table, two chairs and a rocking-chair; a small bedstead and two trunks—Sophie's and her room-mate's—completed the furniture. Sophie threw herself on the bed, and cried, from a feeling of home-sickness and loneliness. Her tea was sent to her, but she left it scarcely tasted, and sat down by the window, watching the gathering darkness, and wondering if she would like her school-mates. She loved Mrs. Bartlett already, but *she* did not teach —Sophie wished she did. She was disturbed in her musings by the entrance of a girl about her own age. "I am your chum, Miss Carleton; we shall be friends soon, sha'n't we?" and she advanced, with a bright smile, and kissed her. Sophie felt happier; and when Mary Roscoe, as she told Sophie to call her, proposed to go down to the school-room, and drew her arm within hers, Sophie made no objection. It was a long room; desks arranged in rows at the sides, and a long table in the centre, around which were

seated twenty-four young girls, all deeply engaged, *some* in *study*, some otherwise. They raised their heads as the new comer entered, and some stared at the tall, slender girl in deep mourning. Her new friend gave her a seat beside herself at the table, and, giving her a book to amuse herself with, said, "No lessons will be required of you to-morrow, but you mustn't talk to me; this is 'silent study-hour' till nine," and she pointed to the clock, and put her fingers playfully on her lips. Sophie smiled: school-girls soon understand each other. She turned over the leaves of her book, but could not get interested, there were so many new faces around her, and they formed a more pleasing study, at present. She knew Mary Roscoe was warm-hearted, from her own kind reception; and conscientious, because, when teased to talk now, she shook her head and touched her lips; and she thought, too, that she was very influential in that little circle; and, by the time the study-hour was out, she

thought she had gained the friendship of the leader at school. She was not mistaken. Mary Roscoe was acknowledged to be the "star of B—— Seminary," with no dissenting voice. Mr. Bartlett came in, and stayed half an hour, answering all proper questions. He shook hands with Sophie, asked her a few questions relative to her studies, and, telling her that she would fall into his division, left her, charmed with the gentlemanly grace of his manner, and with his kindness to herself. At nine one of the girls touched the bell, and away went the books, laughter and confused talking taking their place for fifteen minutes; and then, the bell being struck for silence, they went two by two to the hall for prayers. After prayers they went quietly to their rooms; and at ten lights were out, and no talking allowed. Sophie went to sleep happier than she thought possible the first night from home. Ought she to kneel and pray? This she debated; conscience gained the victory,

and she knelt as usual. In a moment Mary was kneeling beside her; and, when they arose, Mary said, "I'm so glad you did it, Sophie! I was wishing to do so, very much, and now see how you have helped me!" That was the reason why Sophie slept so sweetly that night! We will allow a letter to Minnie, after two months had passed, tell the story of her school-life.

"DEAR SISTER MINNIE:—A long letter this time shall it be? Your last letter was read a great many times, and the box gratefully received. Mary Roscoe, and a few other intimates, enjoyed the contents with me, not forgetting a generous slice of *your* cake to Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett. The time passes very rapidly—almost *too* much so. I'm learning—I feel it! Our winter-evening readings, and your explanations, I now find very useful. I can answer a good many general questions. I have many friends, *some* of them Christians. We have a school

prayer-meeting once a week; we call it the 'Band of Hope.' One girl always leads our meetings; her name is Anna Thomas. She is a good singer, a good reader, and a good Christian—everything but a good scholar. I'm afraid I shall value learning more than goodness—for I do admire a fine scholar! Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett even exceed my expectations; I love them *very* much! I'm home-sick sometimes,—at twilight and Sundays, mostly. I study hard, and hope that when Sophie returns sister Minnie will not be ashamed of her. There are many trials in this miniature world of ours, and a good deal of human nature shown! I attend Bible-class, and like it much. I'm very happy here, Minnie;—am I ungrateful to be so, away from those I love best? You say, 'Be happy, Sophie!' and my heart says, 'Be good, Sophie!' Do I *do* any good? you ask. I *try* to, Minnie. I long for you so much! I can't write what I would say; you know *my* pen was never that of a 'ready writer!'

"I've seen a bit of poetry of *yours*, Minnie; it was on a piece of paper that was round a bundle. Do you remember it?

"'Life is sweet! the mountain streamlet
Murmuring in the solitude,
And the breeze that stirs the foliage
In the solemn, silent wood,
And the lilies lowly bending,
Opening their petals——'

It's torn off there!—isn't it provoking? Are you all well, and happy? Do they miss Sophie at home? How are father, wild Gracie, and Nellie? There's the study bell!—I must go, with only time to say, Love, love to all, from SOPHIE."

Meanwhile, how fare our friends at the grove?

XVII.

The Weary is at Rest.

ONE afternoon Minnie received a summons to go to Rebecca. It was the latter part of November, and a cold, windy day. She hastily followed the messenger, and found Rebecca—dying. Her father was standing in agony beside her.

"*Father*," she whispered, "may I say '*father*' now?"

"My child! my child!" and the old man groaned aloud.

Father! She had not spoken that word since he had forbidden her, months ago. It was the last word she ever said on earth. Minnie asked,

"Are you happy, dearest friend?" But she could not answer; she pressed her hand, and smiled.

A tall, fine-looking young man stood beside the bed. Minnie had never seen him, but Rebecca told her with a look who it was. He bent over her as if his life hung upon hers, hearing nothing, seeing nothing else. What was it to him that others were there? He only knew that Rebecca was dying!

Rebecca motioned for prayer. "Mr. Melville, pray," said Old Isaac. They all knelt, and Minnie thought she had never heard such a prayer. When he said, in closing, "Grant our petition in the name of Jesus of Nazareth," Old Isaac started painfully. She then motioned for Minnie to sing. Minnie tried, but tears choked her voice; and Mr. Melville, in a clear, sweet voice, finished singing the hymn. There was a few moments' silence, and Old Isaac left the room; he could not see his daughter die. Rebecca followed him with her eyes, and then closed them wearily.

Mr. Melville repeated the words,

"'There is a calm for those who weep,
A rest for weary pilgrims found;
They softly lie, and sweetly sleep,
Low in the ground.'"

He stopped, but Rebecca motioned for him to go on.

'The storm that wrecks the winter's sky
No more disturbs their deep repose,
Than summer evening's latest sigh,
That shuts the rose.

"'I long to lay this painful head
And aching heart beneath the soil,
To slumber in that dreamless bed
From all my toil.

"'There is a calm for those who weep,
A rest for weary pilgrims found;
And while the mouldering ashes sleep
Low in the ground,

"'The soul, of origin divine,
God's glorious image, freed from clay,
In heaven's eternal sphere shall shine,
A star of day.'"

Rebecca lay still, and he repeated, soothingly,

"'Yea, though I walk through the val-

valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.'"

Then Minnie said—

"'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'"

She clasped Minnie's hand more tightly, and Minnie longed for her to speak. The next time that voice would be heard it would be singing glory to the Father, and redemption by His love.

Mr. Melville continued—

"'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.'

"'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things have passed away.'

"'And they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads. And

there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.'

"'And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'"

Rebecca thanked him with a grateful look. She fell into a sweet sleep, Mr. Melville and Minnie watching her. The shadows of night were falling, and the little room was almost dark; a little fire flickered on the hearth; still they sat, watching the dear sleeper. Old Isaac came in again, and took a long, last look at his sleeping child, and went out weeping. Friends came in, one by one, to take a last farewell, and still Rebecca slept. Two hours they watched her, and then she awoke. Minnie bent over her, and kissed her cold lips, once, twice, thrice, and then went to the window, with her back towards

the bed, not wishing to intrude upon Mr. Melville's parting. Soon he came to her. "She has gone," said he, sadly. Minnie kissed her pale brow once more, and closed her eyes. She was very beautiful; they both thought so, for Mr. Melville said,

"'Tis only the beautiful casket; the jewel is now in the diadem of her Messiah."

And Minnie went out, leaving the mourner alone with the dead.

XVIII.

Uncle Harry's Return.

SOPHIE was now expected home. They all counted the weeks, at last the days, and Sophie was again among them. Everything was shown to her in the house, and around it, for Gracie thought she must have forgotten how everything looked. The pony had grown so much, she must see it; and there was a new one, which she must help name. At her suggestion 'twas called Stella, they all saying 'twas the prettiest name they had ever heard. And Rover—poor, faithful Rover—was dead! and she must see his grave, and the epitaph Gracie had written, after three days' hard study. It troubled her exceedingly, for she knew that dogs had no souls. She couldn't say that he'd gone

where good dogs go, for she didn't know where they went. At last she produced the following:

"The flowers wave
O'er the lowly grave
Where our faithful dog reposes;
The song of the bird
Is sweetly heard,
As it warbles 'mong the roses.
His eyes grew dim
In the service of him
Whose daughter is o'er him weeping;
Now in the earth,
We feel his worth,
And we leave our Rover sleeping.

She took it to Minnie in great glee.

"There! who says I am not a genius? I was *only* three days about it."

Minnie laughingly read it. "Did you weep over him, Gracie?"

"Why, yes, I cried a little bit."

"There are no flowers—only grass!"

"Oh! but that's a poetical license."

"You were very long, it seems?"

"Yes,' said Gracie; "I can only write

when the spirit of poetry moves me—it didn't *this* time."

When Sophie read it, she laughed. "So you have the fever coming on?"

And then she must pet the pussy—Laurie's pussy. That was a short, happy day to the Carletons.

A few days after, they were all sitting together on the balcony; it was dusk, and they were talking rather sadly, as that hour always brought thoughts of the loved and lost. Slowly the gate opened, and an old man walked wearily up the path. Mr. Carleton rose, with his accustomed politeness, to receive the stranger. His face could not be seen, but, as soon as he spoke, Mr. Carleton, recognizing the voice, exclaimed, "Harry! my brother!" and wept upon the old man's neck.

It was some time before either of them could speak.

"Will you welcome old Uncle Harry back?" said the old man to Minnie.

"Gladly," said she, "for your own sake, and for *mother's*."

He glanced at her mourning-dress, and did not ask where her mother was.

There was much to tell the wanderer, and the brothers spent the evening alone. They all loved him—he was so gentle, and told them so many pleasant stories of foreign lands. He had even seen the pyramids, and sailed upon the river Nile, and many were the hours the children passed at his side. One day he and Minnie were left alone. He loved her better than he did the others, because of her resemblance to her mother, and because she bore that mother's name.

"Sit down, Miriam," said he, "I want to talk to you. I call you Miriam," he continued, "because I love the name. I've not spoken it before since I parted with *her*, seven and twenty years ago, but it was always the sweetest of all words to me. I loved her when we were children, Miriam, and that love grew with me; but she loved

your father better than me, and I went away and wandered without friends and without God in the world. This was my home in childhood. I drew water with the same "moss-covered bucket" that now "hangs in the well," and climbed these same old oaks. I planted the acorn, Miriam, when but six years old, from whence sprung that noble tree in the garden. My initials and your mother's were cut on that tree by my hand—" and overcome with memories of the past the old man bowed his head and wept.

"Don't talk any more, dear uncle," said Minnie, putting her arm around his neck—" don't, it pains you."

"No, no," and the old man raised his head. "I love to speak of those only green spots in the desert of my life. My life has been in vain, Miriam. Look at that face," and he pointed to his portrait on the wall; "now look at this," and he pushed aside the few grey hairs that hung around his brow. "See care and sin written on my face. I'm not

old in years alone, Miriam; my heart is seared and blighted. My only hope now is, that God will not "break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax."

"I have a son, Miriam, the child of my adoption. I found him weeping, an orphan, at his mother's grave, before he could realize his loss. I love him as my own, and he knows no difference. I call him Laurence. He's studying medicine in Paris. I would not let him come with me, but came alone, sick. On arriving at New York, I one day fainted in the street; when I came to myself again, I was in a large, well-furnished room, and a young man, a stranger, was bending over me. He had found me in the street, and cared for me. I stayed there, at —— Hotel, two months. Every day he visited me, and read and prayed with me, though I scoffingly said 'It can do no good;' but soon I longed for his coming, and eagerly drank in his words. He found me an infidel, and left me —a Christian. He was a noble young man,

and I love him as a son, for he was more than a son to me. I've forgotten his name—I wish I could remember it. Oh! here's his card;" the old man took it from his pocket and gave it to Minnie.

What made the tears come to Minnie's eyes, and why did she start?

In his own hand-writing, Minnie read—

"RALPH MERTON."

"What's the matter, Miriam? Do you know him?"

"Yes," with a very bright face.

"Now, Miriam, I've come home to die, to sleep where my father and mother sleep—and with *Miriam!*" said he to himself.

The autumn had come, and Sophie had returned to B——. The home at Oak Grove was as quiet as ever, and quieter, for Uncle Harry was ill, very ill. Minnie watched him with unwearied care. She it was who smoothed his pillow, gave him the cooling draught, and bathed his brow. Hers were the footsteps that never disturbed him; hers

the voice that was sweetest of all, and he wished no one else near him.

Laurence was sent for. He came in great grief. Minnie was watching over his father when he entered the room.

She advanced towards him, saying,

"My cousin!" and gave him her hand. He held it one moment without speaking, and then turned to his father.

Minnie went to the next room, and left father and son alone.

For a fortnight Laurence shared her care; and then the silver cord was gently loosed, and the old man went to his rest. "It is not *hard* to die!" were his last words. They that looked upon him said, "He is not dead, but sleeping," so gently did he breathe away his life—as a tired infant sinking to repose. Life *is* sweet, but death *is* sweeter. And he was laid in the family burial-ground. The wanderer had gone home at last.

Laurence staid with them three months. They all loved him, though they knew he

was not their cousin. Minnie always said "Cousin." Laurence was too sacred a name for any other than her own angel Laurie. Laurence Carleton he always wrote his name; he knew no other.

He went away suddenly, looking pale and sad they all thought.

Minnie knew the reason; he had asked her to be his wife, but her heart was not her own.

About this time Old Isaac died; he died of a broken heart, and died, as he had lived, in the faith of his fathers.

XIX.

The Old Bay Window.

TWO years have passed. Sophie has almost finished her last year at school, and is expected home. Nellie has grown into a reserved, thoughtful girl of sixteen; and Gracie, wild Gracie, the twin-sister, is as bright and beautiful as ever, with the same artless, winning manner.

One Sunday evening Minnie was standing alone in the old bay window in the library. Gracie came in, and putting her arm around her, asked,

"Sister-mother, why are you so sad?"

"Not sad, Gracie, but thinking."

"Thinking as ever! about what?"

"Of you, dear Gracie."

"Of *me?*"

"Yes, Gracie, and of mother's trust. I

promised her that I would train you all for heaven. Sophie is a Christian. Nellie too. Laurie is in heaven—dear little blind Laurie; and, Gracie, *you* are the only one straying from the fold."

Gracie burst into tears, and sobbed for some time. She always did when spoken to of religion.

"Dear Gracie," said Minnie, "won't you try to love the Saviour? Promise me, darling, *will* you try?"

"I *do* try, Minnie, I *do* try. I would be glad to love Him if I only could."

"Gracie, He is more willing than you *can* be; you *will* try?"

"Yes!"

"Because, Gracie, I'm going away soon, and I can't leave my mission unperformed—my mother's trust slighted!"

"Oh! Minnie, I *can't* let you go!"

"Jesus did more for me. *I'm* only leaving home and friends, and if I love *these* more than Him, I'm not worthy of Him."

"I'm sorry only at times, Minnie, when I think only of the Cross; but when I think of the Crown, I'm glad."

They were silent for a long time, but stood at the window with their arms around each other.

"Minnie," said Gracie, at length, "I'm going to ask you a funny question."

"Well," said Minnie, with a smile, "you're a funny girl, you know, and I sha'n't mind it."

"Minnie, do you go to India because you love Ralph Merton, or because you love the —Saviour of the heathen?" said Gracie, very slowly.

The tears started to Minnie's eyes.

"Have I pained you, Minnie? Do forgive me!"

"No, Gracie; I go because I love the Saviour."

Gracie searched Minnie's face. There was no wavering; the steady voice had told the truth; the clear eyes said the same, and

the soul that looked through them said, "Because I love the Saviour of the heathen."

Gracie looked relieved.

"I'm so glad, Minnie! That question has troubled me a good deal lately. It *would* come up, and I couldn't keep it down."

"Why did you think of it?"

"Because—because," said Gracie, "I think he is so worthy of my sister's love, that—"

"She would love him, and forget her God?"

"Yes; that's it!"

"Are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly, dear Minnie! How could I doubt you?"

There was a quiet wedding in the pleasant parlor at Oak Grove, one June morning. It was a "happy-sad" one, Gracie said.

In a few weeks Minnie visited her mother's and Laurie's grave once more; had *one* more twilight talk; bade adieu to her father and sisters, her dear childhood's home, and her

native land, and crossed the ocean to a foreign shore, to take the olive-leaf to the dark-browed mothers of the East.

XX.

Retrospect.

FIFTEEN years are passed. Minnie and Ralph are still in their Eastern home, more engaged in their self-sacrificing work as the years roll on, cheered by each other's love, bearing the cross, hoping for the crown. Minnie was pleased and surprised to find Mr. Melville there, a co-worker with them. He never married, but lived for Christ.

Three little ones grace the home of the Mertons. The first, with violet eyes and drooping curls, although a girl, is Laurie—simply, Laurie Merton. Next is Gracie—a playful, attractive child of six; and lastly is the baby-brother, little Harry.

They have been once to the old homestead, across the water, and there, in the old west room, little Harry first opened his eyes.

Mr. Carleton has given up business, and is leading a quiet, easy life at Oak Grove. Nellie lives with him; *she* is the "old maid" —so from choice, for her father's sake. Good Katy is still there, and calls it her home.

Sophie, strangely enough, is the wife of Laurence Carleton, and, as a physician's wife, is working quietly in her own sphere. And Gracie—happy, laughing Gracie!—lives in the great city, the honored wife of an intelligent, wealthy, Christian merchant, the admiration of a large circle of friends, and the happy mother of two little daughters—*one* is Minnie. She has not yet lost her playful, graceful manner; her heart is fresh, and her brow clear. The wealthy, attractive Mrs. Emerson is *Gracie Carleton* still, ever stretching out her hand to the needy, and ever forward in all good works. The last one is gathered into the fold, for Gracie is a Christian. Her letters to her "sister-mother," as she still fondly calls her, often go to the far-off land, laden with their

precious freight of love and encouragement.

The homestead is the gathering-place, and there, at Thanksgiving, they all meet—none absent save one, and *she* is given to the mission-work.

Anna is married, too, but living at the manor. Her father is reconciled, now, to his son's choice, and would not have it otherwise. Her *mother* is in heaven.

Thus "*Home* Scenes and *Heart* Struggles" continue still, and will, till all meet in HOME, SWEET HOME; and there all "struggles" cease.